

Breaking Dramatic Illusion and Extending the Dramatic World: French Civil-War Tragedy  
(1550–1643)

By

Brian Moots

Submitted to the graduate degree program in French and Italian and the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy.

---

Chairperson Bruce Hayes

---

Paul Scott

---

Caroline Jewers

---

Diane Fourny

---

Geraldo de Sousa

Date Defended: May 7, 2014

The Dissertation Committee for Brian Moots  
certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Breaking Dramatic Illusion and Extending the Dramatic World: French Civil-War Tragedy  
(1550–1643)

---

Chairperson Bruce Hayes

Date approved: June 9, 2014

## **Abstract**

This research project combines history, cultural studies, and performance theories to explore the threats posed by tragedy during the civil and religious crisis in France. French plays challenge civil and religious authority and justify revolt by the literal and figurative reenactment of sedition. In the sub-genre of civil-war tragedy, David rebels against the anointed king Saul, Caesar contends against Pompey, Roman senators slay the victorious Caesar, and Antigone disobeys her uncle and king, Creon. Adopting these famous examples of revolt enables playwrights to break the dramatic illusion of the play, creating crucial parallels with contemporary France. Historical examples give concrete support for the propaganda clothed by the tragedy, while staging revolt elicits violence from spectators because it dangerously encourages them to think independently, to investigate through reading and interpretation, and to lose control in riots and other acts of violence.

The first chapter will identify threats in theater by exploring elements of tragedy, in the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies, where the author is most visible (in liminary material, prologues, and opening monologues) all of which break the play's stage illusion, forming a dangerous complicity between audience and author. In the next chapter, an analysis of the chorus suggests its role produces an effect similar to the paratext; the chorus interrupts the on-stage action and establishes historical precedence for the propaganda in the tragedy. These playwrights expanded and emphasized the role of the chorus, a stronger reliance on this role not reflected in most Ancient Greek or Roman tragedies, sources the French playwrights imitated. The third chapter explores the compelling roles of leading women to gain crucial insights into family, gender roles, and the threat perceived to social order by these female tragic heroes. The final chapter will examine the dialogue between loyalty and revolt in the sub-genre of civil-war

tragedy, a dialogue that is connected intimately to contemporary events and to the author's political or religious confession. I hope this inquiry will provide new perspective for the French civil and religious wars, including the Saint Bartholomew Day massacres, and deepen our understanding of the often-overlooked genre of sixteenth-century tragedy.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Bruce Hayes for his mentorship, patience, and encouragement. I am grateful to Paul Scott for his insightful comments and ideas. I thank the Department of French and Italian of the University of Kansas for funding to conduct archival research in London and Paris. Thank you Angela Moots.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Sixteenth-Century Theater.....	2
Historical Context.....	6
Sub-Genre of Civil-War Tragedies.....	8
Dissertation Structure and Overview.....	13
Previous Scholarship.....	28
Outline of Civil-War Tragedies.....	31
 <b>Chapter 1: Interaction with the Audience: Breaking Dramatic Illusion.....</b>	 <b>32</b>
The Perceived Threat of Theater.....	33
Interaction between Author and Public: <i>Exemplum</i> .....	38
Ambiguity of <i>Exemplum</i> .....	42
Exemplum and Historical Analogy.....	51
Interaction between Author and Audience: <i>Elocutio</i> .....	59
Interaction with Audience: The Shift toward Pathos.....	63
Interaction between Author and Audience: Prologues and Monologues.....	69
 <b>Chapter 2: The Chorus and Stage-Illusion.....</b>	 <b>82</b>
The Choral Interlude: Interrupting Stage-Illusion.....	83
Interaction with the Audience.....	90
Interpretive Voice and Allusiveness.....	92
Music, Song, and Psalms.....	99
Protestant Biblical Tragedies.....	103

Framing Debate.....	119
<b>Chapter 3: Female Protagonists: More Effective Tragic Heroes for Civil-War Tragedies.....</b>	<b>127</b>
The Widow in Tragedy.....	128
Woman on Top.....	135
The Supernatural.....	139
To Be a Tragic Hero.....	141
Women Inspire Men.....	146
<b>Chapter 4: A Dialogue of Resistance.....</b>	<b>159</b>
Ambiguous Visions of Triumph.....	162
Tyranny.....	177
Right to Revolt: Iconoclasm.....	182
Pollution and Iconoclasm.....	188
The Law.....	193
Duty to Revolt.....	197
King's Two Bodies and <i>Lèse-majesté</i> .....	201
Changing Perceptions.....	208
<b>Conclusion: Rebirth of Civil-War Tragedy in France (1636–43).....</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>232</b>

## **Breaking Dramatic Illusion and Extending the Dramatic World: French Civil-War Tragedy (1550–1643)**

Theater intrigues scholars because it gives an invaluable window into history, culture, and literature. Nevertheless, sixteenth-century French tragedy remains a neglected, yet crucial terrain of contending power relations. Scholars overlook these tragedies because critical editions are rare, because primary texts are distant and difficult to view, and because previous scholarship has labeled them as inferior works of art. However, this dissertation validates the genre as essential to penetrating the complex and problematic relationship between social conflict and art during the civil and religious wars in sixteenth-century France. A sub-genre of civil-war tragedies highlights this social conflict, making the clashes staged in these tragedies a cultural artifact that reveals relationships between groups of people, history, and performance.

This research project combines history, cultural studies, and performance theories to explore the threats posed by tragedy during the civil and religious crisis in France. French plays challenge civil and religious authority and justify revolt by the literal and figurative reenactment of sedition. In the sub-genre of civil-war tragedy, David rebels against the anointed king Saul, Caesar contends against Pompey, Roman senators slay the victorious Caesar, and Antigone disobeys her uncle and king, Creon. Adopting these famous examples of revolt enables playwrights to break the dramatic illusion of the play, creating crucial parallels with contemporary France. Historical examples give concrete support for the propaganda clothed by the tragedy, while staging revolt elicits violence from spectators because it dangerously encourages them to think independently, to investigate through reading and interpretation, and to lose control in riots and other acts of violence. These subversive actions include psalm singing,



idol smashing, and taking up arms. Such performances need further examination because they signal sixteenth-century tragedy as a powerful vehicle for cultural dissent.

The first chapter will identify threats in theater by exploring elements of tragedy, in the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies, where the author is most visible (in liminary material, prologues, and opening monologues) all of which break the play's stage illusion, forming a dangerous complicity between audience and author. In the next chapter, an analysis of the chorus suggests its role produces an effect similar to the paratext; the chorus interrupts the on-stage action and establishes historical precedence for the propaganda in the tragedy. These playwrights expanded and emphasized the role of the chorus, a stronger reliance on this role not reflected in most Ancient Greek or Roman tragedies, sources the French playwrights imitated. The third chapter explores the compelling roles of leading women to gain crucial insights into family, gender roles, and the threat perceived to social order by these female tragic heroes. The final chapter will examine the dialogue between loyalty and revolt in the sub-genre of civil-war tragedy, a dialogue that is connected intimately to contemporary events and to the author's political or religious confession. These chapters will consider differences between confessed Protestant and Catholic playwrights and their civil-war tragedies, but will also indicate the many ways in which they are alike. I hope this inquiry will provide new perspective for the French civil and religious wars, including the Saint Bartholomew Day massacres, and deepen our understanding of the often-overlooked genre of sixteenth-century tragedy.

### **Sixteenth-Century Theater**

The mid- and late-sixteenth century was decisive for the evolution of modern French theater. The Wars of Religion prevented the formation of a formal theater, an institution that had to await a

Richelieu and a more stable France. The only fixed theater was the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris, where a stage and other annexes were added in 1548 by the famous *confrères de la Passion*. The *confrères* had intended to stage mystery plays; however, unfortunately for this performance group, the Parlement of Paris banned mystery plays in the same year the theater was built. Many provincial parliaments quickly followed with their own prohibitions. These prohibitions, combined with strong attacks against farce and morality plays by both Protestant and Catholic authorities, profoundly influenced the further development of tragedy.

Meanwhile, an interesting phenomenon during this period was the appearance of professional troupes of actors who wandered from town to town, plying their trade in defiance of prohibitions and lack of permanent stages. Similar to the medieval confraternities such as the Basoche and the Conards, these troupes continued to perform many morality plays and farces, but in contrast, these actors began to perform contemporary tragedies and comedies. Their repertoire shows the continued strength and popularity of medieval genres and at least a small demand for *théâtre à l'antique*.<sup>1</sup> Most humanists, such as those who formed the *Pléiade* circle of scholars and artists, fought against these medieval traditions, and in 1549, one of its most famous members, Joachim Du Bellay, encouraged young writers to break with these genres in order to model their tragedies and comedies on classical authors. Du Bellay wrote sparingly on the subject of theater in his *Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*, but other playwrights increasingly began to develop a much-needed corpus of theory for French comedy and tragedy.<sup>2</sup>

Little dramatic theory existed during the Middle Ages and this lacuna forced Renaissance playwrights to return to Roman and Greek works on poetics. Through this imitation, they were

---

<sup>1</sup> See the article "Le répertoire de la troupe de Talmy" in Lebègue's *Études*, pp. 254-69.

<sup>2</sup> Du Bellay advised: "Quant aux comedies et tragedies, si les roys et les republiques les vouloint restituer en leur ancienne dignité, qu'ont usurpee les farces et moralitez, je seroy' bien d'opinion que tu t'y employasses, et si tu le veux faire pour l'ornement de la Langue, tu scays où tu en dois trouver les archetypes."

able to develop a unique theory derived from these classical models as well as medieval stage traditions. The three most well-known and cited authors of literary theory during this early period of theater were Horace, Donatus, and Diomedes. Missing from this list is Aristotle. Although there was familiarity with his works, Aristotle's *Poetics* was not published in France before 1538 and not translated into French until 1671. Also contributing to this focus on Roman instead of Greek thought was the lack of knowledge of Greek, which trailed behind the mastery of Latin. The first clear indication of the conscious use of Aristotle's *Poetics* is in the preface to the tragedy, *Saül le Furieux*, by Jean de La Taille in 1572.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the *Ars Poetica* of Horace was undoubtedly the most influential literary treatise. Using Horace, Renaissance dramatists could distinguish the essential traits of tragedy and comedy and sought a clear separation of genres, one of the primary criticisms of medieval theater.

The Pléiade had almost no involvement in the production of tragedies, but there were friends of the Pléiade such as Robert Garnier and Jean de La Taille who composed many tragedies.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the Pléiade did exert much indirect influence through poetic practices and theory, but as already noted, Du Bellay's *Deffense et illustration de la langue françoise* mentions the theater only briefly. Many playwrights expounded their thoughts and ideas about drama in the prefaces of the plays, and this scattering of poetics created a disunited and unorganized corpus of theory.

Interestingly, very young artists led the development of this *nouveau théâtre à l'antique*. Étienne Jodelle, humanist and Pléiade member, was only twenty years old in 1552 at the time of successes of his first tragedy and comedy. Jacques Grévin was in his early twenties when he staged his tragedy and two comedies. Jacques de La Taille, brother of Jean, died at twenty after

---

<sup>3</sup> Mazouer notes this intriguing phenomenon in his *Théâtre français de la Renaissance*, p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> See the article "La Pléiade et le théâtre" in Lebègue's *Études*, pp. 208-19.

having written two tragedies. La Péruse died at the age of twenty-five years old after having written his tragedy, *Médée*, and Charles Toutain was twenty-one when he published *Agamemnon*. Apart from being young, most came from literary circles formed from inside certain *collèges* such as Boncourt and Coqueret in Paris. At these schools, the writers commonly received an education as jurists along with a humanist formation.

Among these young poets, there still exists a debate about who produced the first, true French tragedy. Some argue in favor of the young humanist Etienne Jodelle, who wrote and staged his *Cléopâtre captive* in 1551 to the overwhelming accolades of other humanists, especially from the Pléiade.<sup>5</sup> Others give this distinction to Calvin's eventual successor in Geneva, Théodore de Bèze, who published *Abraham sacrificant* in 1550. De Bèze initially intended the drama for his students in Lausanne, but the play quickly gained a wide popularity. The work by De Bèze is undisputedly the first original play in French to carry the designation *Tragédie* in the title.<sup>6</sup> However, some scholars question if the play should rightly fall into the category of a tragedy *à l'antique*.<sup>7</sup>

Jodelle's tragedy undoubtedly received the strongest support from the contemporary intelligentsia, but the play soon disappeared from discussion after the initial burst of praise. De Bèze's tragedy, on the other hand, continued to be reproduced in further editions and translations in several countries and languages. Nevertheless, many dramatists imitated Jodelle's methods and style that he had modeled closely on antiquity rather than following De Bèze's more popular approach intended to reach a broader public. The well-known theater critic, Gustave Lanson,

---

<sup>5</sup> Jodelle is also given credit for the first *comédie à l'antique*, his *Eugène* in 1553.

<sup>6</sup> The complete title is: *Abraham sacrificant, tragédie française*.

<sup>7</sup> In his article, "Les Tragédies bibliques, sont-elles tragiques ?" Mazouer outlines the problem of whether *Abraham sacrificant* should rightly be called a tragedy. The questions arise from style, structure, and most significantly, the lack of tragic ending.

observes that, “Bèze a fait jouer une pièce, Jodelle a fondé une tradition.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, by the mid-sixteenth century, French tragedy had clearly set forward on the path of resurrection and imitation of classical theater and had consciously begun to distance itself from medieval traditions in drama. Meanwhile, as French scholars developed the genre of tragedy, French society entered upon the path leading to religious and civil crisis. A connection to these contemporary events in De Bèze’s tragedy, especially a connection to the religious debates, undoubtedly helped De Bèze achieve a greater success than Jodelle. Subsequent tragedians, almost all Protestant writers, imitated De Bèze’s use of analogy to set up their tragedies as historical *exempla*.

### Historical Context

Sixteenth-century tragedy remains distinctive to its historical context, and signals an intimate connection between French tragedy’s birth and the civil and religious wars of the last half of the sixteenth century. These dynamic years frame the beginnings of French tragedy: the fading glory of the French Renaissance, the shocking death in 1559 of Henry II, the uncertain weakness of youthful princes, the steady increase of religious and civil discord in the early 1560s, and the climactic morning of slaughter on August 24, 1572 – the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre. That the birth of French tragedy coincides with such dramatic events is both sorrowful and poetic. As Françoise Charpentier observed: “Si c’est un hasard, il est éloquent.”<sup>9</sup>

The modern nation state organized around a strong and orderly central authority was still suffering birthing pains in early modern France, and recent historians have applied the concept of

---

<sup>8</sup> Lebègue, *La Tragédie religieuse en France*, p. 317.

<sup>9</sup> Charpentier, *Pour une lecture de la tragédie humaniste*, p. 5.

composite government to this period.<sup>10</sup> The country had enjoyed an extended period of able leadership, centered on the person of the king, from the end of the Hundred Years War to the Wars of Religion.<sup>11</sup> However, a succession of unstable Valois monarchs (1559–89) exposed that France remained a divided state composed of contending regions, classes, and confessional groups who all held tightly to local traditions and customs. *Un roi, une foi, une loi* remained an illusory ideal and fundamental problems emerged. What was, in fact, the king's legitimate power? Which Christian confession possessed truth? Which laws were authoritative? This foundational creed suffered under sustained questioning and found itself reduced to severe contention that exploded into open warfare across France and throughout many regions in Europe.

These conflicts were political, literary, and religious. The plurality of Reformation movements further complicated the religious tradition based on ancient that had gradually developed over hundreds of years. Problematic for French kings was the Church's authority; it originated from a longer and older tradition than the French monarchy. Secondly, the deeply rooted Greco-Roman tradition had exercised a continuous influence throughout the Middle Ages and then saturated French culture during its renewal in the Renaissance. Finally, local customs and practices of authority remained strongly present in France and continuously challenged the enforcement of centralized rule.<sup>12</sup> Arlette Jouanna, explains: "La France de la Renaissance est

---

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Nexon has recently shown in *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe* the inherent weakness of central authority in early modern states. Historians Frederic Baumgartner and Arlette Jouanna both emphasize the limitations of royal authority in early modern France. Baumgartner states: "For a royal institution, the Parlement had an amazingly strong sense of autonomy from the monarchy." *France in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 5. For the pluralism inherent in early modern governments see: Fanny Cosandey and Robert Descimon, *L'absolutisme en France : Histoire et historiographie*.

<sup>11</sup> Roughly 1461 to 1559, encompassing the reigns of Louis XI, Charles VIII, Louis XII, Francis I, and Henry II. Baumgartner: "Kingship was largely what the individual king wanted to make of it and what effort he was willing to expend to be a strong ruler." Baumgartner, *France in the sixteenth century*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Arlette Jouanna describes the situation perfectly: "Il est d'autres facteurs d'hétérogénéité dans le royaume. Chaque province, chaque ville, chaque corps a ses privilèges, c'est-à-dire, au sens étymologique du terme, ses lois privées,

alors un agrégat de pièces disparates.”<sup>13</sup> France remained culturally and physically divided. Several regions such as Navarre, Savoy, Orange, and Brittany remained sovereign kingdoms until the beginning of the sixteenth century. Many other provinces were still under control of foreign powers, including Alsace, Lorraine, Artois, Franche-Comté, and Roussillon. Suffering under contention because of competing sources of authority – social, political, religious, and literary – this divided kingdom and its weaknesses are understood best in a core of sixteenth-century French tragedies that stage civil war in ancient Greece, Rome, and Israel.

### **Sub-Genre of Civil-War Tragedies**

The civil-war violence provided a background of misery and suffering that influenced the neglect of comic genres; meanwhile, the production of tragedy thrived. Acting troupes continued to perform the fading medieval theater of farce, mystery, and morality, but tragedy quickly replaced those genres and overtook them in number of publications and performances - authors composed 100 to 150 tragedies during the years 1550 to 1610.<sup>14</sup> However, a large number of these tragedies remain lost and many more were staged about which there remains little information. Therefore, it is difficult to calculate the percentage of these plays that fall into the category of civil-war tragedies, but of those 100-150 tragedies produced, at least a quarter to a third are based on civil-war subjects. An outline of the civil-war tragedies discussed in this study is located at the conclusion of this introduction.

---

qui lui donnent une spécificité jalousement défendue. Bien des provinces sont administrées par des assemblées, les états provinciaux, où siègent les délégués des trois ordres qui constituent la société : le clergé, la noblesse et le tiers état. Dans les pays où règne le droit coutumier, en gros la moitié nord de la France, la justice est rendue selon des coutumes qui varient d'un endroit à l'autre, alors que dans les pays de droit écrit c'est le droit romain qui fait autorité. La pesanteur des hiérarchies creuse les distances sociales, malgré les liens clientèle, d'amitié et de sociabilité qui cimentent chaque communauté. Tous ces éléments font de la France un agrégat de particularismes qui rendent hasardeuse toute tentative de généralisation à l'échelle du royaume.” *Le Devoir de révolte*, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Mazouer, *Théâtre français*, p. 195. See also Lebègue, *Études*, p. 196.

Civil-war tragedies form a sub-genre of sixteenth-century tragedy that engages more clearly in contemporary events than other plays, because they reflect the disorder that dominated the political and social environment. In addition to reflecting civil-war discord, these tragedies seek resolutions to the disorder that was threatening to tumble France into anarchy. Civil war in ancient Greece, Israel, and Rome lent the subjects for the majority of these tragedies because of the close parallels between ancient and contemporary history. For example, the recurring civil wars in the final days of the Roman Republic that preceded the establishment of the Empire provided a large amount of intriguing material for French authors. Other tragedians found appealing sources in the momentous conflicts surrounding the lives of Saul and David, the first two kings of ancient Israel, and their conflict over the throne. Lastly, the civil war in ancient Thebes, centering on the legends of Antigone and her uncompromising brothers, supplied material for a fewer number of tragedies. The frequency of drama, poems, essays, and pamphlets that borrow episodes from these specific eras reveals not only the popularity and familiarity with the stories, but also the deep significance attached to these sources as historical *exempla*.<sup>15</sup> Also significant is the fact that these subjects parallel two major streams of thought and culture under serious contention in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France: classical scholarship and Christianity.

---

<sup>15</sup> Charpentier, *Pour une lecture de la tragédie humaniste*, p. 25. The following is a table reproduced from Charpentier and illustrates the rise in the number of tragedies taken from biblical subjects and antiquity after 1610. Charpentier's study is limited to tragedy up to 1610.

	Ancient subject	Biblical	Other
1548-1625	32.7%	21%	46.3%
1548-1610	38.2%	24.4%	37.4%



The biblical stories surrounding the first two kings of ancient Israel (Saul and David) provided a rich source of material that appealed to both Catholic and Protestant authors.<sup>16</sup> Writers felt a strong attraction to stories about the two kings, the characters who surrounded them, and the period of transition and civil war in ancient Israel that physically scarred the land and spiritually wounded the community. They perceived in these stories contemporary problems such as tyranny, revolt, divine providence, and collective sin and punishment.

The affinity for this important period of biblical history arises not only because of the clear political and historical parallels between two nations ravaged by internal conflict and civil wars, but also for the infamous protagonists of the stories. Authors – playwrights, poets, historians – searched for what meaning could be gleaned from the biblical understanding of royal power and responsibility.<sup>17</sup> The history of the reigns of Saul and David is the primary Old Testament illustration of just and unjust, divinely sanctioned or condemned, rule. French authors perceived this history as an essential *exemplum* from which they could describe, understand, and possibly correct the tragic situation of their own people and times. The circumstances in ancient Israel, in their eyes, uncannily mirrored their own and many tragedians, both Protestant and Catholic, such as Des Masures, La Taille, Montchrestien, Garnier, and Philone explicitly define their endeavor in dedications, prefaces, and prologues to apply the lessons contained in their tragedies to contemporary France. All of the initial tragedies about David center on his conflict

---

<sup>16</sup> The Biblical histories of Saul and David are found in the two books of *Samuel*, *1 Kings*, the two books of *Chronicles*, and many of the *Psalms* refer to various scenes from David's life. All biblical citations in English will come from the New International Version Bible unless otherwise noted.

<sup>17</sup> There are several excellent studies that investigate political and historical analogies between Renaissance drama and sixteenth-century France. See Vernet, "L'histoire tragique au service d'un Prince: Un sens politique de la Trilogie de Des Masures?" pp. 146-81. See also Gillian Jondorff, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century*. Alexandre Lorian examines the repeated use of certain biblical protagonists in Renaissance drama and the appeal of these characters in *Les Protagonistes dans la tragédie biblique de la Renaissance*. Solomon Liptzen makes a more specific study of biblical characters in *Biblical Themes in World Literature*.

with Saul. Not until the beginning of the seventeenth century did tragedians finally begin to dip into the stories of David's later years centered on his love affairs.

The stories of Saul and David continuously inspired various works of art, poetry, and pamphlets. David's cycle of sin, penitence, and forgiveness attracted imitators in Renaissance art, poetry, pamphlet, and tragedy. Albrecht Dürer fashioned an elegant engraving around 1510 called *King David Doing Penance* that illustrated the story. Henry III imitated this scene from the life of David when he made a penitential walk through Paris while wearing sackcloth. Poets also found material from these stories. For example, Du Bellay composed a short poem called the "Monomachie de David," published in 1552, and recounting the single combat (*monomachie*) of David against Goliath.

A cornucopia of pamphlets referenced the lives of Saul and David and many took up episodes as the basis for polemic. The pamphlet, *Le Glaive du Géant Goliath Philistin et ennemi de l'Eglise de Dieu. Recueil de certains passages où l'on voit que le Pape a la gorge coupée de son propre glaive* (1561), reviews the battle of David and Goliath as a simple anti-Catholic polemic. This type of polemic continued throughout the civil war period, evidenced by another pamphlet in 1618, the *Le Combat de David contre Goliath* by Jean Le Normant. Catholic authors and pamphleteers were able to appropriate the same episodes for anti-Protestant propaganda. The pamphlet by Alexandre Regourd, a Jesuit priest, published his *La Deffaicte de Goliath et confusion des Philistins, ou Réfutation du livre intitulé "Anticalvin catholique"* in order to parry these attacks.

A few writers attempted to use the life of David as a source of authority and instruction manual for princes. Guillaume Michel attempted to gain divine sanctification for the authority of the French monarch as the most Christian king by elaborating a dialogue between David and

Francis I. The loquacious title of his work is *Le penser de royal mémoire, auquel penser sont contenuz les épistres envoyez par le royal prophète David au magnanime prince, céleste champion et très crestien roy de France, François premier de ce nom.* (1518) The example of David also served as an interesting instruction manual for young students.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the stories about David and Saul, the Roman civil wars were a favorite subject of French poets, artists, and tragedians. This is apparent by the numerous plays, poems, paintings, engravings, architecture, and treatises adapted from this era of Roman history that comprised a period of intense struggle between constantly shifting forces. Justus Lipsius often repeated the expression that Rome was a simile of his own age. He explains in his edition of Tacitus' works that he sees the period as "quasi theatrum hodiernae vitae." He also observes in his third edition of the *Annals and Histories* (1585) that:

The History of Tacitus does not present the spectacle of wars and triumphs...but you see there kings and monarchs, in brief the theater of today. I see a prince who sets his face against laws and customs, subjects lined up against their king; I discover the maneuvers and machinations designed to oppress liberty and the pathetic struggles involved in trying to recover freedom; I read of the fall and ruin of tyrants, of the uncertainty of power when it has become excessive. I find the ills of freedom once recovered, the confusion, jealous emulation among equals, cupidity, theft, and public goods diverted from public benefit.<sup>19</sup>

Justus Lipsius' works were popular and widely known in France. Many of his works became standard texts that scholars cited, discussed, and borrowed by others.

As with David, writers and artists encouraged comparisons between ancient heroes and contemporary men and women. A favorite comparison was with Julius Caesar, often used to build an image of glory and authority. These analogies are evident in the pamphlet, *La Devise du*

---

<sup>18</sup> See the *David, virtutis exercitissimae probatum Deo spectaculum, ex Davidis, pastoris, militis, ducis, exsulis ac prophetae exemplis, Benedicto Aria Montano meditante, ad pietatis cultum propositio, aeneis laminis ornatum a Joanne Theodoro et Joanne Israele de Bry* (1597). These publications show the interpretive and discursive possibilities of stories surrounding David and Saul and their strong application to contemporary France.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in McGowan, *The Vision of Rome in Late Renaissance France*, p. 123.

*grand Henry IV où il est comparé à César, et les guerres de la Ligue avec celle de César et de Pompée*, published in Utrecht in 1598. Antoine de Bandole made a similar comparison in his *Parallèles de César et d'Henri IV* (1600). I hope this case-study will transcend the limited scope of this sub-genre, and find utility for interpreting other types of theater and polemical works.

## **Dissertation Structure and Overview**

### **Interaction with the Audience: Breaking Dramatic Illusion**

During the civil and religious wars in France, authorities consistently prohibited drama, yet they attended plays, described their virtues, and used their rhetorical power to advance their prestige. How do we explain how theater could at once be so popular, enjoyed by all classes, and yet perceived by contemporaries as so threatening? This chapter aims to explain the contradiction and to identify the inherent threats in theater by exploring elements of tragedy in the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies, where the author is most visible – liminary material, prologues, and opening monologues – all of which break the play's dramatic illusion, forming complicity between audience and author. Authors use these elements and techniques to provoke engagement from the audience (both readers and spectators), implicate them in civil-war violence, and coerce them to act. Theater was interactive; off-stage events and people influenced theater, and theater influenced events and audiences.<sup>20</sup>

The perceived threat of theater to undermine authority and lead to violence, and its ability to communicate political and religious propaganda, uncovers a growing interaction between author and public during the Renaissance. An analysis of the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies suggests that these plays, both written and performed, could coerce readers and spectators

---

<sup>20</sup> Jody Enders notes several occasions of stage performances leading directly to violence or imprisonment. See her article, "Of Protestantism, Performativity, and the Threat of Theater." See also Natalie Zemon Davis, especially "The Rites of Violence" and "The Reasons of Misrule" in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*.

through a dynamic relationship between author and audience. This interaction broke the dramatic illusion of the play, and through its encoded, audiovisual propaganda, theater commanded spectators' attention to draw them into the ideologies and discourses contained in the play. To engage audiences, both Catholic and Protestant tragedians composed dedications, prefaces, and poems in which dramaturges showed they were masters of all the customary *topoi* and rhetorical commonplaces, including *captatio benevolentiae*. Whether through text or performance, tragedians earned the reader's and spectator's goodwill by establishing credibility, evoking the audience's sympathy, showing a common cause with the audience, illustrating the relevance of the work by forming analogies to contemporary events, and finally, building the tragedy as an *exemplum*.

Historical examples were more powerful and efficient than fictitious examples because they resonated with power and strength in precedent. In Ancient Rome, Quintilian explained: "For while the former (historical examples) have the authority of evidence or even of legal decisions, the latter (fictitious examples invented by the great poets) also either have the warrant of antiquity or are regarded as having been invented by great men to serve as lessons to the world."<sup>21</sup> Aristotle advised imitating historical subjects to develop solid premises because these subjects were known to be true. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle counseled tragedians to include names of great historical characters because they were more persuasive, and what has already occurred was evidently real.<sup>22</sup> Aristotle used the terms *poiesis* and *mimesis* to describe a writer's two critical tools: creation and imitation. Tasso proposed the same theory in the first of his *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* (1587). The epic poem must be founded on the authority of history, he

---

<sup>21</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, ed. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library, section 2.4.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter Nine in modern divisions of the *Poetics*.

explained, because a historical subject conveyed greater verisimilitude, and then, the new work could itself become history.

Erasmus supported the use of example in his *De copia* (1512). Example could amplify (*amplificatio*) and enrich material by the accumulation (*copia*) of proofs and arguments. *Copia* and *amplificatio* meant an abundance of words through *synonymie*, and an abundance of ideas through examples and images. Erasmus suggested, “A most effective means of making what we are saying convincing and of generating *copia* at the same time is to be found in illustrative examples, for which the Greek word is *paradeigmata*.”<sup>23</sup> Both Catholic and Protestant humanists received extensive training in jurisprudence and rhetoric – an education that certainly contributed to their affinity for historical precedents.

Tragedians referenced these prestigious contemporary writers as well as those from antiquity to build a foundation of authority and to establish the truth and credibility of their subject – Roman, Greek, or Biblical. In addition to imitation (*imitatio*), playwrights conformed to the humanist model of *emendatio* formulated in antiquity by Quintilian. *Emendatio* is a phase of composition involving revision and abridgement. It ensures an author does not merely follow his natural inclinations, but instead appeals to the judgments of others, a practice also recommended by Horace. Prefaces and letters of dedication commonly preceded published sixteenth-century tragedies, because playwrights followed an unwritten rule that states all works must have the endorsement of a respected authority in the republic of letters. Being an author meant being a part of a social and cultural network that legitimated the writer’s name and their work.

---

<sup>23</sup> Erasmus, *De copia* or *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo*. See *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style* in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, p. 606.

Prologues and opening monologues substitute prefaces, arguments, epistles, and other prefatory verses, reflecting the rhetorical elements found in this liminary material. All civil-war tragedies except La Taile's *Saül le Furieux* (1572) open with either a prologue or a long monologue, and sometimes with both.<sup>24</sup> A prologue or monologue reveals the effort to engage the audience by breaking dramatic illusion rather than the effort to represent and develop plot and character by building illusion, thus the reason sixteenth-century tragedy has received much criticism for lack of development and action, as well as the reason these tragedies have been passed over in previous scholarship of the period. In spite of this criticism, these literary devices (prologues and monologues) serve a critical purpose: the prologues and monologues give the stage to one actor who communicates directly with the audience, instructing and preparing them how to interpret the upcoming tragedy on this stage.

Nevertheless, *exemplum* can be problematic because the polysemous term contains both demonstrative and non-didactic connotations. The concept reveals contradictory visions of antiquity and of Christian scriptures because example alters perceptions by selecting and framing an event or by subordinating it to a rule, which depends on the author's (and audience's) own interpretation. Cities portrayed in civil-war tragedies (Rome, Thebes, Jerusalem), or characters (Saul, David, Antigone, Caesar) are not a *speculum vitae* – a perfect reflection of sixteenth-century reality – they reframe reality to suit the direction in which the author guides the audience and coerces them to act. The selection and reframing process leads to diverse interpretations of specific historical episodes. For example, Brutus could be a tyrant slayer or a treacherous assassin, a hero or a traitor; David could be a loyal and humble servant or a treasonous rebel.

For a more concrete example, Grévin's tragedy *César* (1561) unexpectedly surfaces with a new title and preface in the edition published by Raphaël du Petit Val in 1606. Grévin's *César*

---

<sup>24</sup> This tragedy is a rare sixteenth-century example of a play beginning *in medias res*.

also reveals the dangers of contradictory visions where two opposing interpretations of a play exist. The original title was the neutral, *César*, but Le Val renamed the tragedy, *César poignardé, ou la liberté vengée*. The new label explicitly guides the reader to a narrow interpretation of the tragedy in relation to contemporary events. In order to enhance its power, the author dangerously draws parallels between the performance and off-stage reality – a strategy that amplifies the threatening image of theater because Le Val posits the tragedy *César* as an example of justified regicide. The differing interpretations of events and characters in the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies give insights into the contemporary debates over political and religious authority and its ability to incite disorder when a tragedy takes one of these well-known historical examples and fashions it as an *exemplum*, or model of revolt or regicide.

### **The Chorus and Stage-Illusion**

In the next chapter, an analysis of the chorus suggests its role produces an effect similar to published paratextual material; the chorus breaks dramatic illusion and establishes historical precedence, a continuation of the author's voice intervening in the play to inspire interaction with the public. French playwrights used the chorus to provoke engagement from the audience (both readers and spectators) and coerce them to act. This chapter also explores an intriguing mystery of sixteenth-century French theater: Protestant playwrights composed the majority of tragedies during the first half of the Wars of Religion (1562-1598). In addition to this phenomenon, these playwrights expanded and emphasized the role of the chorus, a stronger reliance on this role not reflected in either Ancient Greek and Roman tragedies, sources the French playwrights imitated. Although choral singing was established in Ancient Greece, the



number of verses given to the chorus in sixteenth-century French tragedy exceeds the part it played in Greek or Roman tragedy.

How important is the chorus in sixteenth-century tragedy? In *Adonias* (1586), the chorus's parts are longer than all other parts combined. Other Protestant tragedies do not achieve this level of choral saturation; nevertheless, choral interludes account for twenty-two percent of the lines in *David combattant* (1562), seventeen percent in *Saül le Furieux* (1572) and fifteen percent in the *Thébaïde* (1584). The role of the chorus, however, will disappear from French tragedy by the middle of the seventeenth century, the once vital role becoming a liability. That makes the sixteenth-century chorus unique to its historical context, and signals an intimate connection to French tragedy's birth during the civil and religious wars of the last half of the sixteenth century.

The link between choral interlude and psalm singing in early Protestant tragedies made the chorus inherently subversive, a rhetorical element Catholic playwrights would imitate when they began to dominate the genre near end of the civil and religious wars. Psalm singing initially became associated as a sign of protest because Reformers often sang while marching through the streets. It was not the psalms and singing itself, but the when and how Reformers sang them that made the action coercive and threatening. It signaled their religious independence and united them as a spiritual community in protest of sanctioned forms of worship: the Catholic Mass. Most importantly, the psalms were sung in French, which the Church initially condemned. Moreover, the Peace of Amboise (1563) restricted Protestant worship to a suburb outside certain cities or to the private homes of nobles. This sign of public protest betrayed the appearance and conditions of a religious riot. Defined by Natalie Zemon Davis, this is, "any violent action, with words or weapons, undertaken against religious targets by people who were not acting *officially*

and formally as agents of political and ecclesiastical authority.”<sup>25</sup> The Catholic Church forbade singing psalms in French, especially as a public form of community worship, for it encouraged religious liberty and was led by illegitimate authorities. Psalm singing had a long tradition of inclusion in the Catholic worship, but singing in the vernacular outside the purview of sanctioned space made Protestant psalm singing inherently subversive.

Translating the Psalter into French caused much controversy in the sixteenth century and this conflict parallels in many ways civil-war tragedies. Clément Marot and his project to translate psalms attracted immense scrutiny; his faith was questioned and he was accused repeatedly of Lutheranism.<sup>26</sup> In 1535, Marot dedicated an incomplete edition of psalms to Francis I, whom he called on to imitate King David, to whom tradition attributed many psalms. Francis I and later Henry II approved and enjoyed the psalms, but the theology faculty of the Sorbonne and many town synods consistently banned the translations, sometimes threatening the death penalty. In 1547, the psalms were banned in France, but still published. Thomas Champion dedicated his music for the psalms to the king in 1561, one year before the full outbreak of civil and religious wars. Théodore de Bèze, Calvin’s successor in Geneva, was given permission to translate the psalms by Charles IX and his mother Catherine de Medicis in 1561, after the Colloque de Poissy, but the endorsement was soon withdrawn.<sup>27</sup> De Bèze continued nevertheless and the Geneva edition of all 150 psalms (49 by Marot, and 101 by De Bèze) appeared in 1562, the same year as the First War of Religion.

Censorship and punishment were ineffective and the Catholic Church found itself in a difficult position in France. Sections of the Church noted psalm singing inspired passion and a rising apostasy. Chanson X of the *Contre poison* by Artus Désiré recorded: “En chantant ceste

<sup>25</sup> Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, p. 153.

<sup>26</sup> See Screech: *Clément Marot: A Renaissance Poet Discovers the Gospel*.

<sup>27</sup> See “Théodore de Bèze. Psaumes mis en vers français (1551-1562),” p. 199.

chanson nous faisons prière et oraison à Dieu que les pervers nuisans à sadicte Eglise Romaine, lesquelz par fraude et dol decoipuent et trompent les vrays fidèles et catholicques, dont ladicte chanson est fort propre et convenable pour le temps qui court.”<sup>28</sup> Perceiving the trend, the Catholic Church discussed a new strategy: a counter-attack with their own translations of hymns, psalms, and the scriptures. The Catholic Church sanctioned a revision of the Bible in French after the 1570’s, also publishing Bibles with orthodox commentary. Jesuits refined the practice by publishing the devotional text with a religious picture or emblem. By 1589, there were documents such as *Prières à l'imitation des Pseaumes de David pour l'Eglise Catholique apostolique et Romaine, assaillie par les hérétiques en ce pauvre et desdé Royaume de France. Avec une prière pour l'armée catholique* (1589).<sup>29</sup> In addition to these translations into the vernacular, the Counter-Reformation trend affected sixteenth-century tragedy. After 1580, Catholic playwrights composed the majority of tragedies in France, including an emphasis on the role of the chorus similar to the preceding Protestant biblical tragedies.

Many choruses in Protestant biblical tragedies imitate the psalms. Two tragedies by Protestant authors, the *David fugitif* (1562) by Louis Des Masures, and the *Adonias* (1586) by Philone – a rare Protestant tragedy after 1580 – uncover a connection between psalm singing, tragedy, and contemporary events. In *David fugitif*, the protagonist David recites the entire Psalm 140.<sup>30</sup> In this psalm, David seeks protection from proud men and slanderers who persecute him. He needs rescue because, “They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent’s; the poison of vipers

<sup>28</sup> Artus Desiré, *Le contre poison des cinquante deux chansons de Clement Marot*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>29</sup> I will be citing from the edition at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, B- 15963.

<sup>30</sup> Louis Des Masures, *David fugitif*, 1509-68. Citations will be taken from the edition published in Enea Balmas and Michel Dassonville, eds. *La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX*. Vol. 2. This edition uses modern French spellings. The play is not divided into acts, which makes it difficult to understand the purpose of the psalm in this location, about two-thirds into the play.

is on their lips.” (Psalm 140:3) The play’s prefatory material has established David and his rebellious followers as persecuted Reformers, including Des Masures and his audience.<sup>31</sup>

The communal spirit inspired by choral singing gave tragedy a powerful voice. In the fifth act of Philone’s *Adonias*, the chorus sings Psalm 72 in alternating couplets. The psalm was composed for Solomon’s coronation ceremony and describes the ideal king, one who bases his rule on righteousness and justice. The tragedy takes up this period surrounding Solomon’s rise to the throne and stages Adonias’ rebellion against his brother and divinely anointed king, Solomon. Considering the historical context and the author’s tone as Protestant polemic, it is easy to identify Adonias as the Catholic Duke of Guise and Solomon as the Protestant Henry of Navarre, the two leading contenders for the French throne.<sup>32</sup> These two performances, *David fugitif* and *Adonias*, therefore, suggest a legitimate act of revolt against royal and religious authority, while the liminary material and chorus coerce the public to imitate these subversive actions by alluding to the audience as persecuted brothers and sisters.

### **Female Protagonists: More effective tragic heroes**

Sixteenth-century French tragedy poses another intriguing question: Are the actions and character of the female tragic hero distinct from the male tragic hero? This chapter explores the compelling roles of leading women in order to gain crucial insights into family, gender roles, and the threat perceived to social order by the voice of these female protagonists. These plays stage

---

<sup>31</sup> In the *Epître au Seigneur Philippe Le Brun*, Des Masures explained he wrote, “pour le réconfort et l’édification de ses frères et sœurs en Christ.” This message indicates that his fellow Protestant exiles composed the majority of the audience and should recognize their plight in that of David. Both he and Philippe Le Brun, a Protestant noble and friend, had personally experienced hardships caused by the civil and religious troubles, and he proposed an explicit comparison between their situation and the biblical stories. Des Masures explained, “Cette faveur de Dieu promise à notre foi, / avons nous éprouvée en maint lieu toi et moi, / Dont tu verras les traits aux histoires presentes.” (79-81)

<sup>32</sup> *Adonias* carries the subtitle: “Vray miroir, ou tableau, et patron de l’état des choses présentes, et que nous pourrons voir bientôt ci-après qui servira comme de mémoire pour notre temps, ou plutôt de leçon et exhortation à bien espérer. car le bras du Seigneur n’est point accourci.”

the overpowering of the innocent individual by arbitrary forces and portray the destruction of unwanted elements by tyranny and absolutism. A tyrannical or arbitrary ruler identifies the female voice as a threat and arrogantly refuses to listen to her complaints and warnings, stubbornly unmoved by her impotent performance. Tragedies with leading women reveal strong divisions in the family and elaborate on gendered metaphors for community, the land, and France: all feminine nouns in the French language. Writers illustrate through tragedy that arbitrary power violates the body politic, a *noble pucelle* that personifies *Vérité*. They employ this sexual symbolism to create analogies with social experience during the violent civil and religious wars that was destroying the land. The suffering and violence of women by rape, widowhood, and suicide inspire compassion and coerce the audience to remedy the sorrow.

A major strand of feminist scholarship focuses on the differences that men and women experience in life. However, this approach assumes distinctions must exist. In tragedy, for example, must the female characters be passive and the male active? Must she be either the oppressed and marginalized victim or the demonic witch? These binary attitudes preclude a third option: female protagonists engage in dangerous and futile and destructive struggles; they are coercive agents who undermine established authority.

Is this not the definition of all tragic heroes, male as well as female? Tragedy requires a protagonist's futile struggle within and against a political or social arena. Naomi Liebler defines the tragic hero as "the sacrificial victim required by a purgative ritual, whose efficacy as sacrifice signifies above all the symbolic embodiment of whatever threatens the community in crisis."<sup>33</sup> And Bertold Brecht recognized that tragedy enacts a conflict centered on a human subject who is enmeshed in webs of social, political, economic, and psychological forces.<sup>34</sup> Whether Julius

---

<sup>33</sup> Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> John Drakakis and Naomi Conn Liebler, *Tragedy*, p. 6.

Caesar or Pompey, or Pompey's wife Cornélie, whether Oedipus, or his daughter Antigone, the protagonist's gender does not alter the tragic struggle. Moreover, a female protagonist is, in fact, more effective than her male counterpart. The imagery of her suffering permits a wider range of gendered metaphor, all conspiring to create the greatest effect of *crainte* and *pitié* – the two most fundamental tools of tragedy, tools that best construct and highlight the tragic hero's doomed struggle.

The tragic hero struggles in vain because he or she tries to assert individualism in the midst of oppression or persecution. Autonomy means the independence with which one can make or act upon moral and political judgments. This autonomy to assert one's will on fate or on the community causes the tragedy's crisis, the tragic hero's struggle, and finally, the hero's downfall. Sixteenth-century French tragedies about these men and women show that autonomy, and consequently, subversion, is not gender specific. Autonomy drives Caesar to usurp the Senate's power, it drives Saul to disobey God's commands, and it drives female protagonists such as Porcie (Brutus's wife), Cornélie (Pompey's wife), Rezefe (Saul's wife), and Jocasta (Oedipus's wife, and mother), to speak out and to defend a political position like their male counterparts, who are often their husbands.

The assertion of the female protagonist's autonomy does not imply a rejection of the early modern patriarchal structure; rather, her actions affirm it, since she is fulfilling her duty toward her husband and household in defiance of tyranny; she is continuing the battle in his name. In his critical edition to two tragedies with eponymous female protagonists, *Porcie* and *Cornélie*, Raymond Lebègue remarks that the theme of conjugal love drives both tragedies.<sup>35</sup> This period perceived the family unit as a microcosm of the state – a political household – a household she must hold together when her husband, the head of the household, dies. The image

---

<sup>35</sup> Lebègue, ed. *Porcie, Cornélie*, p. 261.

of Cornélie receiving an urn containing the ashes of her husband symbolizes her new authority as well as the nation's tragic loss. Through this scene, Lebègue recalls the mission of Robert Garnier, the author of these two tragedies, to choose subjects that display France's misery, a contemporary tragedy best represented through the lens of the Roman civil wars and through one of her widows.

At first glance, this superiority of female tragic heroes seems counterintuitive given the general subservient status of women in sixteenth-century France. However, the female tragic hero – the fictional character on the stage – gains a privileged status of power, one that places her on a near equal footing with men: she is a widow. All male protagonists are married, in civil-war tragedies, while all female protagonists are widows, or are widowed during the course of the tragedy. Only one exception questions the rule, Antigone, the young and independent woman who defies a tyrant. However, sixteenth-century tragedies about Antigone are little more than translations of Sophocles original play, and offer less insight about sixteenth-century France than ancient Athens. In all other tragedies, the woman's status as widow alters her role and empowers her. Tragedies that stage the relation of the wife to her husband expresses perceived threats in the relation of all subordinates to their superiors, including subject to king and priest to church.

### **A Dialogue of Resistance**

In civil-war tragedies, power hierarchies create tensions regardless of their nature – political, social, religious, or the king and his court. Similar to *Macbeth's* legacy in English Renaissance drama, French civil-war tragedies portray the dangerous balance between legitimate rule and actual power, the imbalance created by a weak or questionable ruler and a powerful subject. For example, David overpowers the anointed king Saul, Antigone contests Creon, and Brutus slays

Caesar. When traditional authority is not the strongest element in the state, nations divide and disorder reigns. Sixteenth-century French tragedy dramatizes this message: kings must devise how to convert their royal legitimacy into actual power and obedience; a prince's failure and impotency lead to unstable competition between forces, and finally, civil conflict. Revolt, however, was not the immediate solution offered by those discontent with the king and the royal court. Civil-war tragedies stage the contemporary dialogue between loyalty and revolt, and mark the escalation to regicide – Henry III was assassinated in 1589 and Henry IV in 1610.

Participants in the middle of these fiercely contested debates first had to establish a firm standpoint of accepted authority in order to gain legitimacy and recognition for their position. Recognition of authority was unstable and depended heavily on social perceptions. La Roque indicates the critical importance of the social perception of authority in the *Traité de la Noblesse* where he observes, “Il ne suffit pas d’être noble, mais qu’il faut être réputé tel.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, many scholars during the Renaissance explained that the etymology in Latin of *nobilis*, descended from *noscibilis*, which meant recognized, or *connu*. These observations illustrate that authority was determined relationally and that the community must be complicit in the acceptance of sovereignty. An invisible force of seemingly capricious spectators conferred power on authority. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century princes and monarchs clearly recognized this dilemma and the dramatic rise in popularity of the Triumphal Entry is evidence of this understanding. Margaret McGowan has explained in detail how the Triumph in Renaissance France was a common *topos* that conveyed notions of Roman authority and greatness.<sup>37</sup> She also

---

<sup>36</sup> Cited from: Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte*, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> “Renaissance princes required triumphant projections of their aspirations and achievements to reinforce the theatricality which attached to their function and characterized their courts. A propagandist impetus was abroad, blending the authority and status of the ancient world with sixteenth-century visions of what fitted the person and the court of a prince.” McGowan, *Vision of Rome*, p. 313.



makes important comparisons between the Triumph and theatricality as a pair of tools used to construct perceptions of authority.

The Triumph was only one method of self-fashioning that sought a model from traditional and ancient customs and practices. Many leading political figures attempted to harness further notions of greatness by re-casting themselves in the mold of famous examples such as David, Brutus, or one of the Caesars. They often then proceeded systematically to fashion their adversaries as violators or traitors of the same rights and laws. For example, Brutus argues that he is following his duty to the Republic by killing Caesar, a usurper and destroyer of ancient rights and laws. David justifies his continued revolt against Saul because he alone has received divine sanctification as leader of God's chosen people. Saul's madness and the impotent pursuit of his adversary, David, are posited as strong evidence in support of his loss of grace. These rhetorical patterns illustrate the manner in which Reformers argued from a position of religious authority as restorers of the gospel, and also how rebelling nobles appropriated concrete arguments to support revolt against the king. Like Brutus, they positioned themselves as re-establishers of the people's ancient rights. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church used the same methods to unmask Reformers as heretics of the traditional faith. Finally, the king and his advisors systematically qualified all revolt as treason. This self-fashioning of legitimacy built on righteous opposition will resonate in drama where an author posits a tragedy as an *exemplum*.

All civil-war tragedies stage tyranny and all portray revolt against this oppression. It is crucial for this study to describe the manner in which the community of citizens perceives and then reacts to a tyrant on the throne. Theater further develops the question of sanctioned royal authority by staging the complex problem of loyalty to a failed prince. Tragedy narrows the audience's response to the problem by depreciating and vilifying the force which the audience is

intended to recognize as the most subversive – either the weak and tyrannical prince or the individuals and groups opposing his rule. Many tragedies condition a negative and even a violent response from audiences in the portrayal of powerful, but flawed royal figures symbolized by Saul, Caesar, and Creon. The plays illustrate what Stephen Greenblatt observes, namely that, “Power defines itself in relation to that which threatens it.”<sup>38</sup> A tyrant upsets the established boundaries of power to such a degree that the ruler creates opposition to his rule that catalyzes subversive tendencies into outright revolt. This rebellious force will then either receive sanctification as a corrective movement or be condemned as a form of *lèse-majesté*, a direct and treasonable attack against the king. Forces contending against perceived abuses adopt biblical and historical examples and then recast them by molding and altering the stories to support arguments in the debate about the right to revolt.

A ruler’s arrogance and pride are insufficient reasons to revolt; the king must transgress a specific boundary. Civil-war tragedies help illuminate questions about a subject’s right to revolt. The *Triumph* not only reveals the vanity and hubris of a tyrant, but it also resembles a desire for apotheosis, a form of idolatry, and a transgression of the first and second commandments. A tyrant is a heretic. The biblical representation of idolatry reveals a rich source of religious and political polemics, providing a germane model for analyzing sixteenth-century French tragedy. Idolatry is the worship of the physical, a form of adultery against the spiritual realm, which for Christians of the sixteenth century signifies direct revolt against God. The Bible explicitly links idolatry and adultery when describing the covenant relationship, one that Christian Scriptures describe as the marriage of God and the chosen people. Both Protestant and Catholic French authors returned to these biblical sources to express their views of the relationship and contract (covenant) between the king and God, and the king and his people.

---

<sup>38</sup> Cited from Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton, *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*, p. 7.

The tyrant may also represent a form of pollution, a poison to the body politic that must be purged. Iconoclasm became not only a *topos* in the religious debate, but also a political ideology, and at times, a polemic used to attack the reputation of enemy groups, doctrines, and leaders. The Reformation movement extended the traditional definition of iconoclasm (idol smashing) to include hagiography and the Catholic Mass. Protestant reformers labeled images used in Church ceremony and religious instruction as a direct violation of the second commandment. Not only Protestants, but also many Catholics perceived the applicability of this effective *topos* in order to spur self-reform in the Church. Idolatry is heresy and all heresy implies rebellion against God. When a heresy such as idolatry causes rebellion, it is the duty of the faithful to combat and eradicate the threat. This doctrine provided the source of much conflict during the unceasing civil war in sixteenth-century France because both Protestants and Catholics considered themselves to be participants in a divinely sanctioned Crusade against seditious elements undermining social order.

### **Previous Scholarship**

Critical examinations of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century tragedy have been largely marginalized because of aesthetics, and also due to unfavorable comparisons to late seventeenth-century theater. The reputation and study of this period of French tragedy have suffered in particular because modern critics have unjustly neglected it as the amateurish and immature precursor to the refined masterpieces of Corneille and Racine. Mid- to late seventeenth-century tragedy has become the norm by which all earlier and later tragedies are judged, and the period leading up to it has often been labeled pre-Cornelian. This notion of a teleological approach to the history of French tragedy is an easy temptation even for sympathetic readers of so-called pre-

cornelian tragedy. Unfortunately, any theory of evolution automatically implies an ascent from the earlier model to the latter, thus devaluing the work of foundational and formative periods. These tragedies need to be included in the literary canon because they provide a critical portrait that helps to understand the complex cultural elements of early modern France. The popularity of the theater throughout this period is incontestable, and remained a steady and strong presence throughout France among a wide variety of social classes.

A recent renewal of interest in this period of tragedy has begun to advance the work needed to rehabilitate it as a hitherto marginalized branch of French theater. Theater scholars are collaborating with historians, religious studies, and other fields. These interdisciplinary exchanges have been productive. However, sixteenth-century tragedy is still in serious need of further work. The eclectic approach of Renaissance writers has challenged the application of specific models or paradigms limited to single elements such as literary design, rhetorical devices, poetics, historical and political context, dialogical analysis, or theological studies. Contemporary analyses such as Gillian Jondorff's research into contemporary politics in Garnier's tragedies, Mitsué Mangatalle-Cezette's illumination of the passions in humanist tragedy, Olivier Millet's examination of Christian *topoi*, Richard Griffith's extensive studies on rhetoric, and Charles Mazouer's recent works on sixteenth-century theater have given new directions for future research in the genre. However, researchers in the field still rely upon works that are outdated by several decades, and even recent scholarship on early modern tragedy is outpaced by work in other genres and on other writers such as Ronsard, Montaigne, and Rabelais.

To date, there has been no extensive study on civil-war tragedies, the threat perceived in these tragedies, and their dangerous representations of revolt. This lacuna in the research seems

striking considering religious and political civil wars were ravaging the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century world. This first, full-length study on civil war in French tragedy (1550–1643) will bridge the shortcomings of many studies in our ability to interpret these tragedies because of the traditional and artificial separation between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The analysis will also cross disciplinary boundaries and contribute to the fields of history, literature, cultural studies, and performance studies, while providing crucial insights from theological and philosophical issues. The emergence and development of French tragedy that coincided with the civil and religious wars in France demands this interdisciplinary approach that bridges text, performance, and history.

### Outline of Civil-War Tragedies

1. Coignac: *La Desconfiture de Goliath* (1550)
2. Grévin: *César* (1561)
3. Des Masures: *Les tragédies saintes* (1562)
4. La Taille: *Saül le Furieux* (Composed 1562–63; Published 1572)
5. Garnier: *Porcie* (1568)
6. La Taille: *La Famine ou les Gabéonites* (1573)
7. Garnier: *Cornélie* (1574)
8. Anonymous: *Pompée* (1579)
9. Garnier: *Antigone* (1580)
10. Robelin: *Thébaïde* (1584)
11. Philone: *Adonias* (1586)
12. d'Aigaliers: *Horace trigémine* (1596)
13. d'Aigaliers: *Diocletien* (1596)
14. Montchrestien: *David* (1598)
15. Mont-Justin: *David persécuté* (1600)
16. Billard: *Saül le Furieux* (1610)
17. Scudéry: *La mort de César* (1636)
18. Guérin de Bouscal: *La mort de Brute et de Porcie* (1637)
19. Chaulmer: *La mort de Pompée* (1637-8)
20. Corneille: *Horace* (1640)
21. Du Rhyer: *Saül* (1642)
22. Corneille: *La mort de Pompée* (1643)

## Chapter 1

### Interaction with the Audience: Breaking Dramatic Illusion (1551–1574)

During the civil and religious wars in France, authorities consistently prohibited drama, yet they also attended plays, described their virtues, and used their rhetorical power to enhance their reputations. How do we explain how theater could at once be so popular (enjoyed by all classes) and yet perceived by contemporaries as so threatening? This chapter aims to help explain the contradiction and to identify threats in theater by exploring elements of tragedy, focusing on the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies, where the author is most visible – liminary material, prologues, and opening monologues – all of which break the play's dramatic illusion. This breaking of dramatic illusion forms complicity between audience and author. Authors use these elements and techniques to provoke engagement from the audience (both readers and spectators), implicate them in civil war violence, and coerce them to act. Theater was interactive; off-stage events and people influenced theater, and theater influenced events and audiences.

Sixteenth-century tragedy remains distinctive to its historical context, and signals an intimate connection between French tragedy's birth and the civil and religious wars of the last half of the sixteenth century. These dynamic years frame the beginnings of French tragedy: the fading glory of the French Renaissance, the shocking death in 1559 of Henry II, the uncertain weakness of youthful princes, the steady increase of religious and civil discord in the early 1560s, and the climactic slaughter on August 24, 1572 – the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre. That the birth of French tragedy coincides with such dramatic events is both sorrowful and poetic. As Françoise Charpentier observes: “Si c’est un hasard, il est éloquent.”<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Charpentier, *Pour une lecture de la tragédie humaniste*, p. 5.

Yet these tragedies remain misrepresented and misunderstood. Too much attention has focused on sixteenth-century tragedy's literary flaws (character development and psychology) instead of on how this period conceived the critical importance of theater, including tragedy. They understood theater as a fundamental cultural ritual. The fictional world of the stage could not exist without reference to the audience's feelings and beliefs because tragedy developed out of their fears, disputes, and concerns. Our understanding of French tragedy will benefit from redirecting the focus to comprehending how tragedy affected sixteenth-century reality by threatening the social, religious, and political order.

### **The Perceived Threat of Theater**

The coercive potential of theater had been recognized much earlier than the civil and religious wars in late sixteenth-century France. French kings as early as Louis XII (1498–1515) understood the power of the stage. Louis XII enjoyed the theater and used it to his advantage as political propaganda. Pierre Gringore, his celebrated court poet, composed many pieces – spectacles, plays, and poems – to support the king and the French cause in Italy at the expense of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy.<sup>40</sup> Louis' successors, however, including Francis I (1515–1547), began a policy of repressing theater performances. Town synods in Angers, Paris, and Geneva adopted policies to inhibit theatrical performances because plays targeted certain “gens de bien,” and because the stage gave a platform for subversive voices. French theater scholar, Charles Mazouer, observes, “Il n'était plus question de laisser s'exprimer l'opinion publique par le moyen du théâtre ; et les troubles religieux de la seconde moitié du siècle

---

<sup>40</sup> See Cynthia Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France*. The most successful works include the *Jeu du Prince des Sots* (1512), *L'Espoir de paix* (1510), and the *Blason des hérétiques* (1524). Gringore's propaganda techniques will later be recycled by both Protestant and Catholic writers.



encouragèrent le pouvoir royal à surveiller de très près le théâtre.”<sup>41</sup> This ambiguous relationship with the theater paralleled the alternating enjoyment and interdiction of tragedy in sixteenth-century France.

The royal court was not alone in perceiving the threat of theater; religious authorities adopted similar policies of repression and censorship. Protestant leadership initially encouraged the stage during the tumultuous beginnings of civil conflict in France, but soon turned strongly against theater’s image of disorder. In Geneva, Jean Calvin was more favorable to it than most Reformers, but even he only gave weak support for drama. Leaders of the Geneva republic denounced all stage performances for the same reasons as the Catholic leadership – its coerciveness and clandestine image. In his study on theater and religious politics, Raymond Lebègue concludes, “Si les Protestants sont persécutés par le pouvoir, leur théâtre reste clandestin.”<sup>42</sup> Theater was prohibited by various town synods in Reformer territories: Poitiers in 1560, Nîmes in 1572, Figeac, 1579, and Montpellier in 1598.<sup>43</sup> Intriguingly, publications of Protestant biblical theater almost ceased after 1572, which correlates with the rising pressure against these performances. J.S. Street notes only three new French biblical plays written by Protestants after 1572, and most likely all three were composed and published outside of France.<sup>44</sup>

Catholic playwrights began to dominate theater production in the mid-1570s for obvious historical reasons. In spite of the widespread perception of drama as a threat to social order and religious harmony, the Catholic Church recognized the power that could be harnessed from the stage and permitted Jesuit schools to keep theater as an essential part of their curriculum, the

<sup>41</sup> Mazouer, *Théâtre français de la Renaissance*, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> See Lebègue, *Études*, pp. 196-97.

<sup>43</sup> See Mazouer, *Théâtre français*, p. 161.

<sup>44</sup> Street, *French Sacred Drama*, p. 53.

*ratio studiorum*, as long as their performances edified future defenders of the Catholic faith.<sup>45</sup>

One theater historian observed, “Plus encore qu’un simple complément à l’enseignement de la littérature, le théâtre scolaire joue dans ce cas un rôle véritablement culturel.”<sup>46</sup> The Jesuits incorporated theater as a critical weapon to fight against heresy during the Counter-Reformation movement. The Church began to use the tools their enemies were successfully using to propagate their message, like drama, which helped indoctrinate youth with a Church-approved program of Christian morals.

Authorities were apprehensive because sixteenth-century theater was a powerful polemical tool; it formalized the staging of misrule festivals that brought events to life through performance, and dangerously encouraged spectators to reflect on the meaning of the spectacle. The need for crowd control during stage performances and campaigns to contain and censor theater reveal the significant effects caused by theater’s tendency to instigate action and excite disorder. In her seminal essay “The Reasons of Misrule,” Natalie Zemon Davis discusses the dangers inherent in popular festivals when they include songs, dances, and performances – actions that pertain to theater.<sup>47</sup> Misrule was not purposefully rebellious, however, and was intended for the service of the community, like theater, through the dramatization of life’s different stages and clarification of the responsibilities of the community’s members. Therefore,

---

<sup>45</sup> The Collège de Messine, founded in 1548, was the prototype for later Jesuit colleges of which the Collège Romain became the model in 1551. The Jesuits opened the celebrated Collège de la Madeleine in 1572 to combat the perceived Protestant dominance of many French schools. Ignatius of Loyola formulated the Jesuit model of studies, the *modus parisiensis*, at the heart of which were the classical authors, similar to the humanist schools. However, the Jesuits innovated with sterner discipline and by incorporating studies of history, geography, and the sciences. The schools however, seemed more like monasteries and convents than academies. “Les jésuites voulaient former des chrétiens et des chrétiens capables de collaborer à l’œuvre de l’Eglise, qui est de racheter le monde et de le mener à Dieu, à commencer par les hérétiques qu’il faut reconquérir pour l’Eglise de Rome.” The Jesuit curriculum had been elaborated over a long period of time but was codified in the *ratio studiorum* by Pierre Nadal and finally published as the *Ratio atque Institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu* in 1599.

<sup>46</sup> Mazouer, *Théâtre français*, p. 156.

<sup>47</sup> See Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*.

like the theater, Misrule was intended to strengthen boundaries and educate citizens how to maintain social, political, and religious order – but inspired the opposite.

The ritual of status reversal served to loosen the rigors of a structured society and infused the system with at least temporary values of equality. For Bakhtin, the carnival was the primary source of liberation, destruction, and renewal.<sup>48</sup> Similar to the illusion created by theater, the festival of Misrule created a second reality for citizens who found themselves separated from power and the state.<sup>49</sup> Misrule created a brotherhood, or fictional “kingdom,” in opposition to or in conjunction with a royal court or a nearby abbey. The festival gave license to mockery, parody, or satire of these established authorities; the inherent dangers of this liberty were self-evident.

During festivals and parades, common people played the roles of the community’s powerful members – stock characters such as abbots, barons, admirals, princes, judges, princesses, and captains – whom they either praised or condemned according to their right or wrong actions. Zemon Davis observes, “These elements of political and social criticism in the midst of carnival were intended to destroy and renew political life in Mikhail Bakhtin’s sense, but not to lead directly to further political action.”<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, subversion was inescapably present; suggesting or performing alternatives to social, political, and religious order created disorder.

Sixteenth-century tragedy contributed to the apprehensions of authorities and established itself as a powerful mechanism of cultural dissent. The literal and figurative reenactment of civil-war episodes made tragedy the site of Renaissance protest by competing with civil and religious

---

<sup>48</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *L’œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance*.

<sup>49</sup> A useful reminder: tragedy originated out of the death and rebirth rituals in Ancient Greece during the festival of Dionysius.

<sup>50</sup> Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture*, p. 119.

authority. Jody Enders has proven convincingly that theater was perceived as a threat in France because performances directly affected behavior. Enders explains, “theater was a speech-act which had considerable impact on daily life; and that any theatrical speech-act was all the more dangerous in that it invited audiences – characterized as naïve and even childlike – to engage in patterns of thought that were analogous to those which informed the great theological debates of the Reformation.”<sup>51</sup> Theater was threatening because it transgressed the boundary between the fictional stage and real life. Performances encouraged spectators to think independently, to investigate through reading, to question authority, and to lose control in riots and other acts of violence, all of which inspired heresy and subversion.

These activities contributed to increased social tension, conflict, and uprisings; rebellions ensued from the festivals. Heinz Schilling observes:

The visual and symbolic apparatus produced in this context with all its texts, images, rituals, ceremonies, and gestures was not just a series of illustrations but a fully fledged historical actor that decisively influenced the emotional climate as well as the dynamic of the confrontations...They acted so as to validate and confirm hostility and so provided one of the triggers for the great religious and political wars of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. (*Calvinism as an Actor*, p. 169)

The relationship between popular festivals, theater, and political and religious institutions needs further study; they reveal the power of performance to incite and encourage violence, especially when combined with a sermon, speech, or song and dance – the substance of theater – because these elements inflame emotions. Performing one’s part takes on deeper significance in the recognition that the power of authority was inherent in performance, and performance was at the heart of drama.

---

<sup>51</sup> Jody Enders, “Of Protestantism, Performativity, and the Threat of Theater,” p. 56.

### **Interaction between Author and Public: *Exemplum***

Why was sixteenth-century tragedy perceived as such a danger? The perceived threat of tragedy and its ability to communicate political and religious propaganda uncovers a growing interaction between author and public during the Renaissance. An analysis of civil-war tragedies suggests that these plays, both written and performed, could coerce readers and spectators through a dynamic relationship between author and audience. This interaction broke the dramatic illusion of the play, and through its system of audiovisual propaganda, theater commanded spectators' attention to draw them into propaganda contained in the play. To engage audiences, both Catholic and Protestant tragedians composed dedications, prefaces, and poems in which dramaturges showed they were masters of all the customary *topoi* and rhetorical commonplaces, including *captatio benevolentiae*. Tragedians earned the reader's and spectator's goodwill by establishing credibility, evoking the audience's sympathy, showing a common cause with the audience, and illustrating the relevance of the work by forming analogies and building the tragedy as an *exemplum*.

Literary resemblances between Protestant and Catholic dramas are unsurprising since playwrights of both confessions received humanist educations as jurists. The law was critical to sixteenth-century thought and culture, and students obtained extensive training in the need to present evidence and to base arguments on precedent. This training becomes a significant factor in tragedies where authors combine historical and fictional examples to create strong positions of authority; deeply rooted in this sub-genre is the common Renaissance practice of using the rhetorical devices *imitatio* and *exemplum* in order to establish correlations with previous eras and

to seek models of conduct and action.<sup>52</sup> The educational focus of scholars aligned with the didactic intentions of Renaissance authors; dramaturges constructed their tragedies as *exempla* to create stronger engagement from spectators and to give the text greater authority.

Historical examples were more powerful and efficient than fictitious examples because they resonated with power and strength in precedent. Quintilian explained: “For while the former (historical examples) have the authority of evidence or even of legal decisions, the latter (fictitious examples invented by the great poets) also either have the warrant of antiquity or are regarded as having been invented by great men to serve as lessons to the world.”<sup>53</sup> Aristotle advised to imitate historical subjects to develop solid premises because these subjects were known to be true. In Chapter nine of the *Poetics*, Aristotle counseled tragedians to include names of great historical characters because they were more persuasive, and what has already occurred was evidently real. Aristotle used the terms *poiesis* and *mimesis* to describe a writer’s two critical tools: creation and imitation. Tasso proposed the same theory in the first of his *Discorsi dell’arte poetica* (1587); the epic poem must be founded on the authority of history. He explained that a historical subject conveyed greater verisimilitude, and then, the new work could itself become history.

Erasmus supported the use of example in his *De copia* (1512). Example could amplify (*amplificatio*) and enrich material by the accumulation of proofs and arguments. *Copia* and *amplificatio* meant an abundance of words through *synonymie*, and an abundance of ideas through examples and images. Erasmus suggested, “A most effective means of making what we are saying convincing and of generating *copia* at the same time is to be found in illustrative

---

<sup>52</sup> François Rigolot explains *imitatio* and *exemplum* are closely related terms. He also distinguishes between these two devices and *mimesis*; the experience of the real world, or more natural model that appealed to humanists as they struggled to find a perfect model to imitate. François Rigolot, “The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity,” pp. 557-63.

<sup>53</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, ed. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library, section 2.4.

examples, for which the Greek word is *paradeigmata*.”<sup>54</sup> As has been noted, Catholic and Protestant humanists received extensive training in jurisprudence and rhetoric – an education that certainly contributed to their affinity for historical precedence.

Tragedians reference these prestigious contemporary writers as well as those from antiquity to build a foundation of authority and to establish the truth and credibility of their subject – Roman, Greek, or biblical. They conform to the humanist model of *emendatio* formulated in antiquity by Quintilian. *Emendatio* is a phase of composition involving revision and abridgement. It ensures an author does not merely follow his natural inclinations, but instead appeals to the judgments of others.<sup>55</sup> Prefaces and letters of dedication commonly precede published sixteenth-century tragedies, because playwrights followed an unwritten rule that states all works must have the endorsement of a respected authority in the republic of letters. Being an author means being a part of a social and cultural network that legitimates the writer’s name and their work.

Jacques Grévin sought this legitimacy and authority for his plays, both comedies and tragedies, in his treatise on drama. In his *Brief discours pour l’intelligence de ce théâtre* (1561), Grévin refers to Aristotle to further enhance his image as an authority. Grévin also includes references to the well-known Roman poet and critic Horace, as well as the Greek poets Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides – all of which demonstrates his familiarity with the most famous Greek dramatists’ art and methods. He recalls that the celebrated Roman tragedian Seneca imitated Greek models, and concludes that his own tragedy will follow these honored traditions. Grévin further explains tragedy is “une imitation ou representation de quelque faict

---

<sup>54</sup> Erasmus, *De copia* or *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo*. See *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style* in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, p. 606.

<sup>55</sup> Horace, also recommended this practice.

illustre et grand de soymesme, comme est celuy touchant la mort de Jules Cesar.”<sup>56</sup> Grévin proceeds from this statement to explain, “Tragédie n’est autre chose qu’une représentation de vérité.”<sup>57</sup> By this litany of historical and artistic precedent, Grévin creates historical continuity between the preceding golden ages of classical theater and the present rebirth, endowing his own art, method, and examples with greater authority.

Jean de La Taille adopts a similar approach in the preface to his tragedy, *Saül le Furieux* (1572). This preface forms a treatise on rules for tragedy, for which he penned a separate title, *l’Art de la Tragédie*. The title page of *Saül le Furieux* claims that what follows is a “Tragedie prise de la Bible, faicte selon l’art et à la mode des vieux Autheurs Tragiques.” The source of the tragedy is biblical and the plot and characters parallel the biblical accounts (he admits to slight deviations); however, only the *art* of the tragedy is classical. La Taille’s work highlights the process of Renaissance syncretism, combining pagan and Christian culture. Yet divisions between pagan and biblical intertextual borrowings are blurry; there are competing tensions embedded in the process of syncretism. Nevertheless, the tragedy’s biblical foundation and artistic style modeled on antiquity endow the work with stronger credibility.

Stronger credibility and an enhanced image of authority is the reason dramaturges commonly begin by positing the tragedy as an example, from which one should gain direction and knowledge. Shakespeare’s “All the world is a stage” is the most famous example, but a sixteenth-century French dramaturge, Philone, gives the subtitle “vray miroir des choses advenues de notre temps” to his tragedy *Josias* (1566). The most well-known sixteenth-century French playwright, Robert Garnier, states in the preface to *Cornélie* (1574) that the tragedy is a “poème à mon regret trop propre aux malheurs de nostre siècle.” Antoine de Montchrestien,

---

<sup>56</sup> *César*, 22-26. All citations for Grévin’s *César* will be from, *César de Jacques Grévin*, Ed. Jeffrey Foster. All references to the *César* will be by line number.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-3.



another well-known dramaturge, reveals his tragedies' purpose in a 1604 dedication to Condé: "De là se tire le fruit des exemples, que ces miracles de l'une et l'autre fortune fournissent abondamment. Leur vie et leur mort est comme une escole ouverte à tous venans." Example radiates more influence when shared by speaker, listener, reader, and writer; stories are circulated, exchanged, reproduced, and re-circulated to produce a resonance of images and concepts. Well-known examples from antiquity achieved that resonance, and sixteenth-century authors used them copiously.

Great events – the assassination of Caesar, the Theban wars, or the slaying of Goliath – formed a historical reality as concrete as the death of Henry II or the Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre. In his seminal work, *Le Problème de l'incroyance au seizième siècle*, Lucien Febvre convincingly argues that sixteenth-century men and women sincerely accepted the truth of all events recorded in the Bible, and rejected the possibility of fiction or myth.<sup>58</sup> Sixteenth-century scholars also cherished ancient Greek and Roman texts and bestowed upon them strong traditions of unquestioned authenticity. Sixteenth-century scholars often labeled pagan mythology as fictional; however, they approved the historicity of Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cicero, and Antigone. The acceptance of biblical and classical historicity crucially increased the polemical strength of the work and contributed to the reception of the play's implications as well as the author's coercion to act in support of the tragedy's political or religious position.

### **Ambiguity of *Exemplum***

*Exemplum*, nevertheless, can be problematic because the polysemous term contains both demonstrative and non-didactic connotations. The concept reveals contradictory visions of antiquity and of Christian scriptures because example alters perceptions by selecting and framing

---

<sup>58</sup> This view has been contested in limited fashion.

an event or by subordinating it to a rule, which depends on the author's (and audience's) own interpretation. Cities portrayed in civil-war tragedies (Rome, Thebes, Jerusalem), or characters (Saul, David, Antigone, Caesar) are not a *speculum vitae* – a perfect reflection of sixteenth-century reality – they reframe reality to suit the direction in which the author guides the audience and coerces them to act. The selection and reframing process leads to diverse interpretations of specific historical episodes. For example, Brutus could be a tyrant slayer or a treacherous assassin, a hero or a traitor; David could be a loyal and humble servant or a treasonous rebel. The differing interpretations of events and characters in the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies give insights into the contemporary debates over political and religious authority and its ability to incite disorder when a tragedy takes one of these well-known historical examples and fashions it as an *exemplum*, or model of revolt or regicide.

For example, Grévin's tragedy *César* (1561) unexpectedly surfaces with a new title and preface in the edition published by Raphaël du Petit Val in 1606. Grévin's *César* also reveals the dangers of contradictory visions where two opposing interpretations of a play exist. The original title was the neutral, *César*, but Le Val renamed the tragedy, *César poignardé, ou la liberté vengée*. The new label explicitly guides the reader to a narrow interpretation of the tragedy in relation to contemporary events. In order to enhance the interpretive power the author dangerously draws parallels between the performance and off-stage reality – a strategy that amplifies the threatening image of theater because Le Val posits the tragedy *César* as an example of justified regicide.

The question of active resistance against corrupt authority or tyranny forms the critical problem of Jacques Grévin's tragedy *César* (1561). Scholars of sixteenth-century tragedy have much debated Grévin's political stance in the tragedy; the problem arises because a

contemporary historical event invites speculation about its relation to the tragedy. In 1560, on the infamous date of March 15, a small Protestant force attempted to capture the young king, Francis II, during an attack on the chateau of Amboise. The attack failed and most of the band were captured and executed. The timing and purpose of this attack seem scripted for a tragedy about the assassination of Rome's most famous general and first emperor, Caesar.

The author's background causes further confusion about his purpose. Jacques Grévin had strong ties to the *Pléiade* before he supported the Reformation, severed his association with this group of artists, and went into exile. In seeming contradiction to his position as an exiled Reformer, his tragedy's dedication supports the legitimacy of the monarchy. However, it was common among Huguenots until after 1572 to desire the goodwill of the king. Grévin dedicated his *César* to Claude de France, the second daughter of Henry II and Catherine de Medici. The author explains he chose to dedicate the tragedy to her because she was the daughter of a great king, one who resembled the first Roman emperor in "prouesses, vertus, et humanité." Grévin composed the tragedy in 1560, the year following Henry's sudden and violent death while jousting.<sup>59</sup> Regardless of the ill-fated misfortune of the king's tragic end, many suspicions arose among contemporaries that suggested a conspiracy.

The question of whether or not Grévin intended to reference this event is less important for this study than the critical threat to royal authority posed by the performance of assassination of a powerful figure. The allusions to these recent events (attack on Amboise and death of Henry II), coupled with the subject of the tragedy, invites spectators to reflect on themes of pressing importance: the legitimacy of power and the right to revolt against tyranny. The only method to convey the acceptance of a specific interpretation of an ambiguous play like *César* is to break the

---

<sup>59</sup> We also know that *César* was staged immediately on February 16, 1561 in Paris at the Collège de Beauvais.

play's dramatic illusion and communicate with the audience. This need to establish communication with the audience recalls the importance of the play's liminary material.

Grévin, a Protestant tragedian, rejects this call to revolt, and appears to support the reign of Henry II. In a dedicatory epistle, Grévin pleads with the daughter of Henry II to “defendre nostre Cesar de tout danger et conjuration que les envieux de mon nom pourroyent machiner.” He uses this dedication to link the two great leaders, Caesar and Henry II. What makes this tragedy an interesting case is the fact that Grévin had recently returned to France from exile, forced to leave the country because of his Protestant sympathies. His play opens a debate on the justice of assassinating a presumed tyrant and seeks to illustrate the dangers that befall a nation when a great leader perishes. He feels that Caesar, and by extension Henry II, is being massacred yet again, probably a reference to Henry's son and then successor, Francis II. Grévin laments, “En quoy faisant, je n'auray crainte de le revoir massacrer encores une fois, mais plustost je m'asseureray que sa mort luy aura servi d'une immortalité.” The dedicatory epistle and the call to defend Caesar's memory suggest Grévin sympathizes more with the Roman emperor than with the self-fashioned liberators of tyranny. This evidence contradicts a conclusion that the tragedy portrays a balanced argument about regicide.

The change to the title of Grévin's *César* in 1606 by Raphaël du Petit Val betrays the critical importance of the liminary material, serving not only as a guide, but also as a provocation to spectators.<sup>60</sup> In addition to the revised title, Petit Val added an “Argument de la Tragedie” that addresses what he asserts is the correct interpretation of the play. In this “Argument,” Petit Val warns that all tyrants have illegitimately usurped power, illustrating this fact with the heroic actions of Brutus and Cassius, two of Caesar's assassins. All men who slay tyrants are, “vangeurs de la liberté publicque, comme un autre Brute avoit auparavant esté vangeur de la

---

<sup>60</sup> All references are from Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, GD 12916.

chasteté de Lucrece.”<sup>61</sup> Although Petit Val altered the title and appended this Argument to the *César*, he left untouched the text of the tragedy. However, these seemingly minor alterations profoundly influence the perception of the play. Petit Val successfully recasts the tragedy as a call to action against any suspicion of absolute royal power. This reframing of Caesar’s assassination displays the crucial importance of the paratext for interpretation.

Grévin’s dedicatory epistle to the daughter of Henry II shows that many Protestant authors hoped to avoid war, and called on audiences to adopt a strategy of passive resistance toward the king and of active defense against their true persecutors: the Church and the king’s corrupted advisors. These men rushed to take advantage of a young and weak king, Francis II, who took the throne after the death of his father, Henry II. One of these Protestant tragedians was Louis Des Masures, whose *Tragédies saintes* were published a year after Grévin’s *César*. Similar to Grévin’s tragedy, these three tragedies by Des Masures illustrate the dangers of ambiguity inherent in *exemplum*.

Louis Des Masures exhibits this tendency of civil-war tragedians to communicate a conflicted response to events, causing contradictory interpretations of his work. Like Grévin, Des Masures uses a dedicatory epistle to the *Tragédies saintes* to guide the reader’s responses, yet also like Grévin, his choice of subject (Saul and David), is inherently ambivalent. In the *Epître au Seigneur Philippe Le Brun*, Des Masures explains he is writing, “pour le réconfort et l’édification de ses frères et sœurs en Christ.”<sup>62</sup> This message indicates that his fellow Protestant exiles compose the majority of the audience and should recognize their plight in that of David. Both he and Philippe Le Brun, a Protestant noble and friend, have experienced hardships caused

---

<sup>61</sup> *La Liberté vangée, ou CESAR poignardé*, 118. Citations are by line number.

<sup>62</sup> Citations will be taken from the edition published in Balmas, Enea and Dassonville, Michel. Eds. *La tragédie à l’époque d’Henri II et de Charles IX*. Vol. 2. This edition uses modern French spellings. Citations for Des Masures and the *Tragédies saintes* will be by line number.

by the civil and religious troubles, and he proposes an explicit comparison between their situation and the biblical stories. Des Masures clarifies this connection to Le Brun: “Cette faveur de Dieu promise à notre foi, / avons nous éprouvée en maint lieu toi et moi, / Dont tu verras les traits aux histoires presentes.”<sup>63</sup> The Protestant exiles Des Masures and Le Brun have been forced to flee from persecution – similar to David’s flight from Saul’s court. Des Masures hesitates to accuse the king directly, and places the blame on misguided royal counselors like Doeg, Saul’s manipulative and ambitious adviser. Des Masures admits :

Moi, comme poursuivi de Saül qui avec  
L’avis et faux rapport du malheureux Doëg  
Oppresse l’innocent, ainsi par force et guerre  
Des malins suis contraint d’abandonner ma terre.

His family, including wife and children, followed him into exile, which symbolizes the uprooting of a community. This description draws explicit parallels to the exodus currently taking place in many regions in France. Many nobles sold their lands and surrendered the right to their inheritances to leave France and journey to Geneva or elsewhere to escape religious persecution.

After framing events for the audience, Des Masure’s epistle contains conflicted feelings about accusations of disloyalty and the need for defending the Reformation cause, but he receives hope in the story of David’s passive resistance to Saul’s persecution. An analogy to Israel’s first two kings would make it difficult for the audience to receive a message of reconciliation and peace since the history ends in a king’s death, and then his scepter passing to a rebel prince. The performance of David’s rise and Saul’s fall in the trilogy of plays (*Tragédies saintes*) constructs an image of active resistance against corrupt authority.

In the *Epître au Seigneur Philippe Le Brun*, Louis Des Masures attempts to define and clarify David’s role in these tragedies. He explains that David is the best example of patience,

---

<sup>63</sup> Des Masures, *op. cit.*, 79-81.

suffering, faithfulness, and loyalty when facing severe persecution by a tyrant. He calls out to the spectators, his brothers and sisters in exile, and advises, “Tenez donc en vos coeurs les faits et les propos / De David” and “efforcez-vous à David ressembler.” The message reveals the propagation of Calvin’s defense of patience, reconciliation, the avoidance of open warfare, and the support of the French monarch.<sup>64</sup> Des Masures appears to cast David as a loyal and patient subject; however, inciting the audience to follow the example of a successful rebel and usurper justifies acts of subversion. This contradiction prepares the reader for tensions caused by the example of David.

The message to imitate David betrays the inherent ambivalence in the tragedy’s subject. Des Masures’ *Tragédies saintes* founders in the attempt to sustain concepts of passive resistance and produces struggle, tension, and division. In the dedicatory epistle to Philippe Le Brun, Des Masures describes his family’s and his own suffering at the hands of persecutors, creating a positive image of himself as a Protestant exile and condemning his persecutors, royal authority and the Catholic Church. He consistently uses the passive voice and places his family as the object of the verb to highlight their innocence and peacefulness. After commending patience in adversity, Des Masures speaks about the need to fight corruption and advises, “purger l’affection malsaine.”<sup>65</sup> Patience creates endurance, but purging denotes taking action against infecting evil and injustice.

The epistle’s combative language gradually escalates from beginning to end; Des Masures shifts from passive to active language, then he employs commands in the last stanza, for example, “Combattons, allons, marchons.” The series of commands and active verbs in the last stanza of the dedicatory epistle contrasts Des Masures’ effort to evoke the audience’s sympathy

---

<sup>64</sup> Calvin consistently dedicated all editions of his *Institutes de la religion chrétienne* to Henry II.

<sup>65</sup> *La Liberté vangée, ou CESAR poignardé*, 129.

in the first part. The first person plural of the imperative tense also unites Des Masures, Le Brun, and the audience, which represents the Protestant community in France and in exile in Geneva.

The epistle concludes with a condemning verse from Psalm 72: “Ses ennemis lècheront la terre.” For Des Masures, “ses ennemis” refers to flattering royal counselors such as Saul’s advisor, Doeg, the true source of conflict and divisions in the tragedy and in France. This courtier, Doeg, has a much expanded role in the *Tragédies saintes* than is found in the biblical stories of Saul and David, and suggests that Des Masures is accusing French courtiers for his persecution instead of the king and royal family.

Many sixteenth-century French Protestants blamed power-hungry members of the royal court for the civil and religious troubles and their subsequent exile. These corrupt nobles of the royal court were deeply implicated in the previously mentioned *Affaire d’Amboise* in 1560, which occurred 1-2 years prior to the staging and publication of Des Masures’ *Tragédies saintes*. The nobles involved in the attack outlined their cause against these ambitious courtiers in an apology, *Les Etats de France opprimés par la tyrannie de Guise, au Roi leur Souverain Seigneur*. The document’s title reveals that these nobles desired to clarify they were fighting against the corrupting influence of the Guise family, because their assault on the king’s chateau would easily be perceived as a treasonous attack against the king’s own person, or *lèse-majesté*.

Both Catholics and Protestants feared the political ambitions of the powerful Guise family and sought to curb their rising dominance over the royal court.<sup>66</sup> Many feared the Guise family had forced the king and queen mother to obey their will, and Protestants blamed the family for renewed restrictions on their choice of worship. The situation incited a violent

---

<sup>66</sup> Arlette Jouanna, *Le Devoir De Révolte*, p. 123. To illustrate the sudden rise of the Guise family, see the case of Montmorency, a proponent of the moderate position, who saw his funding fluctuate dramatically in contradistinction to the rise and fall of the Guise. The percentage of royal funds given to the Guise family for various titles and positions rose from 28% in 1553 to 74% in 1560 and then dramatically fell to 0% in 1561 after they lost their power and hold over the king.



reaction in addition to the failed Amboise attack; one refugee nobleman in Geneva called on other refugees to “prendre les armes” against the “tyrannie des guisards.” Sixty to seventy men followed him out of the city toward France to free the king and royal court from this tyranny.<sup>67</sup>

Ten years and two civil wars after the *Affaire d’Amboise*, the Protestant playwright Jean de La Taille shifts blame to the rebellious nobles as the cause of the strife and bloodshed. The 1572 edition of his tragedy, *Saül le Furieux*, contains a short dedication to Charles IX. La Taille asks the king to appease the tempests and to look on his kingdom with pity. He specifically addresses the nobility that has caused children to fight against fathers, wife against husband, brother against brother, friend against friend. They would be wise to remember the Roman civil wars that pitted Caesar against his father-in-law Pompey that led to series of battles across the Roman Empire. The reference lends itself as an analogy to the conflict that pitted David against his father-in-law, Saul.

In this tragedy, scholars agree that La Taille evokes intense pity and compassion for Saul, David’s persecutor. He portrays Saul as a helpless king at the mercy of events and of fate. For La Taille and for many moderate Protestants, the situation changed after the Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre in 1572. In his second tragedy, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites* (1573), Saul’s family is massacred, the only solution to halt the famine and the suffering of the people. This message strongly contrasts the first tragedy even though both tragedies highlight the example of the same king.

Unraveling the complexity of interpretation in tragedy is problematic and modern readers often overlook *exempla*.<sup>68</sup> In his seminal study on the concept, *Exemplum: the rhetoric of example in early modern France and Italy*, John Lyons explains, “This common rhetorical

---

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>68</sup> Greenblatt, *Invisible Bullets*, p. 93.

practice in face of contradictory visions of reality leads to lively and often paradoxical texts, revealing the push and the pull of various currents of thought.”<sup>69</sup> In civil-war tragedies, this push and pull of interpretation is directly related to these play’s explicit references to contemporary events in sixteenth-century France: the civil and religious wars. Authors’ efforts to evoke historical examples remind readers of the crucial relation between past and present.

### **Exemplum and Historical Analogy**

Sixteenth-century civil-war tragedy represented real events purposefully chosen to stimulate and condition an engaged response. Dramaturges stressed that events performed in their tragedies were repeating themselves in the present as they had once happened in the past. Historical context was inseparable from the fictional stage, and many tragedies appeared that staged recent deaths of martyrs, warfare, or massacres. Zemon Davis highlights remarks on the close similarity between massacres and executions, and a purification ritual; tragedy dramatizes these same rituals with the same coercive power to imitate the actions being performed.<sup>70</sup>

For example, an anonymous author composed the *Sac de Cabrières* (1551) to represent the siege of Cabrières and the massacre of its inhabitants in 1545. Five students were burned in Lyon on May 16, 1553 after they were condemned for heresy, an event represented in Geneva by students in the tragedy *Cinq écoliers de Berne* (1558). Tragedies about Julius Caesar, Saul, and David, although transpiring in antiquity, contained the same interconnections with contemporary events as those tragedies about more recent deaths of martyrs.

---

<sup>69</sup> *Exemplum*, Preface, p. x-xi.

<sup>70</sup> Zemon Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

History is tragedy, says d'Aubigné in his work *Les Tragiques* (1616), “Quand ce siècle n'est rien qu'une histoire tragique.”<sup>71</sup> With this crucial observation in his epic poem about the French civil and religious wars, D'Aubigné recognizes that tragedy best translates society's fears, difficulties, and collective worries. Performances based on historical events lend themselves to a comparison with the present the same way exemplification connects a general statement or maxim with a local or specific actualization of the example.<sup>72</sup> The content of sixteenth-century tragedy was inseparable from historical context; plays both described civil war misery and incorporated civil war events. Aphthonius in the *Progymnasmata* says that a speech should be divided into three parts: the past, present and future [Proque capitibus, divides tribus ipsam temporibus: praesenti, praeterito et futuro].<sup>73</sup> This structure is seen in tragedy; plays reference the past, relate it to the present, and then prophecy the future. The prefatory material, prologues, and monologues establish connections between past and present, and closing monologues or epilogues give a prognosis for the future.

Tragedians guide the audience in paratextual items to make the critical connection between past and present. A germane example of this is found in the image on the title page of Joachim De Coignac's *La Desconfiture de Goliath* (1551). The image displays two over-sized hands grasping a large axe that descends out of the heavens and prepares to chop down a cluster of trees.<sup>74</sup> A banner enveloping the image contains a warning cited from the Gospel of Matthew that declares: “La coignée est ià la racine des arbres. Parquoy tout arbre qui ne fait pas bon fruit, sera coppé, et ietté au feu.” The present indicative tense in this warning clamors to awaken the

<sup>71</sup> Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, II, 206.

<sup>72</sup> As defined in John Lyons seminal work: *Exemplum: the rhetoric of example in early modern France and Italy*.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Griffiths, *The Dramatic Technique of Antoine de Montchrestien*, p. 109.

<sup>74</sup> There is currently no modern edition of the *Desconfiture de Goliath* and only two copies are currently known, one in Geneva and one in London. I will be referring to the copy in the British National Library in London.

audience from their slumber. The image sends the message: this will not be a tragedy about a celebrated Old Testament story, but a lesson about current events in France.

A *dizain* on the page following this woodcut quickly links the play to contemporary strife; the poem threateningly links the Papacy of the off-stage world to the Goliath of the play. The poet explains to the reader that putting the axe to the tree alludes to the decapitation of Goliath as well as to all who fail to heed the warning. The poet explains:

L'oeil donc charnel, voyant la Papauté,  
Sus maint royaume avoir principauté:  
Par l'Evangile à bas ne void la Beste.  
Mais le petit sur le grand a sauté:  
Car David trenche à Goliath la teste.

The allegory contained in this passage gives the key to decode the tragedy. Both Catholic and Protestant writers continued to draw on medieval traditions in drama and commonly imitated the medieval genre of morality plays. They incorporated allegorical characters – simple abstractions – into their tragedies. Dramaturges used these allegorical characters largely in polemical works to symbolize the Catholic Church: Hypocrisy, Simony, Tyranny, Paganism; and the Reform: Truth, Grace, or Virtue. Allegory allowed an ease of interpretation, easy because Renaissance audiences were accustomed to these abstract characters and personifications in stage productions.<sup>75</sup> Because of this approach, however, many characters in early French tragedy appear poorly developed and resemble simple stock characters, yet gaining distinct names such as David, Saul, or Goliath. Since audiences were accustomed to making these connections, it would be a small step to link these characters and plays to contemporary personages and events.

De Coignac again stresses his tragedy's application to contemporary events in the long dedication to Edward VI, the current King of England. He draws extensive parallels between

---

<sup>75</sup> Some scholars see tragedy's development from morality plays.

David and Edward and between Goliath and the Papacy; furthermore, he indirectly casts Saul as an impotent King of France. He explains that God called Samuel to anoint a holier king, David, because of Saul's fall from grace. De Coignac seizes this premise based on Christian scripture to observe that like Saul, Henry II has lost divine favor for his kingship, and then anoints Edward as the sanctified, *Most Christian King* of the true faith. Announcing to the audience that Henry II no longer merits this prestigious title traditionally carried by French kings poses a serious threat not only to the foundation of royal power, but also to the strong anti-rebellion sentiment of many Reformers in France at this time.

De Coignac's relation of the biblical tragedy to his own times highlights further divisions in an increasingly divided kingdom at the time of publication in 1551. The years leading into the initial eruption of war in April 1562 reveal a strong feeling of hope that the disagreements and heated disputes between contending forces in France, especially between Reformers and Catholics, would arrive at some form of reconciliation.<sup>76</sup> In spite of an element of paradox, many tragedies advance this image of hope and continue to relay the sentiment even after open conflict had begun. The call by many for reconciliation persisted in varying degrees until Saint Bartholomew Day, 1572. However, as authors portray this feeling of hope, they also call into question the very images of central authority struggling to maintain peace and order, thus subverting the processes of peace and reconciliation.

With biblical analogies, De Coignac communicates the need to overthrow the French monarchy, a call for justified revolt. De Coignac explains this position in his nine-page dedicatory epistle to King Edward of England. This letter highlights the unwillingness of the King of France to correct religious abuses by the Catholic Church, abuses that have forced the author to call on the English king for aid. He encourages the king to take action to defeat the *bête*

---

<sup>76</sup> Elliott Forsyth, *La Tragédie française de Jodelle à Corneille*, p.167.

*romaine*, an allusion to the beast of the apocalypse and to corruption associated with Rome, common propaganda used by militant Reformers during this period.

De Coignac's call to the King of England in the dedicatory epistle contains similarities with Luther's appeal to Charles V exactly thirty years earlier in 1520 through the *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* in which Luther rallies the emperor to oppose the "Evil One." De Coignac adopts much of Luther's imagery and arguments, but unlike De Coignac, Luther had still hoped to reform the Catholic Church. De Coignac, on the other hand, is calling for the destruction of Roman Catholic power through a coalition of Protestant armies, at the head of which would be a king and other nobles.

The effort to engage royalty in a dialogue on the tragedy's subject and the call on nobility for leadership consistently appears in both Catholic and Protestant literature throughout the civil war period. The nobility holds a critical advantage; they already possess the legitimate authority and power necessary to inspire reform and change. Nevertheless, they also respect the hierarchies of nobility and lines of succession, complicating their position during civil unrest.

De Coignac appears to ignore this complexity and invites Edward to study the history of David, Goliath, and Saul like an instruction manual. It will justify the way for a king to take up the sword against the Papacy or against another king. The theme of legitimacy enlightens the story of Saul and David and its relation to the king – David was Saul's son-in-law and could claim rights as a member of the king's family and court. This fact, combined with divine approbation, designates David and Edward as legitimate successors to the throne if they would seize the opportunity. By this analogy, De Coignac incites rebellion. Arguments of legitimacy and illegitimacy pose a serious threat to religious and political authority because they empower discontent Reformers with a right to oppose these powers.

The *Desconfiture de Goliath* (1551) appeared a decade before violence escalated, yet De Coignac's dedicatory epistle already reveals divisions and advises the faithful (kings and commoners) to fight. He calls on the audience to "Plustost mourir: il vaut trop mieux combattre / Et employer les moyens que DIEV donne, / Pour soustenir une cause tant bonne." This bellicose language contradicts the powerful voices of respected Reformers; Luther and Calvin argued strongly against armed conflict by citing passages from Christian scripture. Passages such as Romans 13:1 and 1 Peter 2:13 were used to emphasize that all Christians must remain loyal to their earthly masters.<sup>77</sup> The historical and biblical analogies in civil-war tragedies engaged the audience to subvert and contend against royal and religious authority. This gives evidence of an already sensitive and divisive environment primed for the outbreak of violence during the reign of Henry II, a reign traditionally viewed as strong and unified.

De Coignac's explicit call to battle allowed little latitude for peaceful negotiation and foreshadowed the failure of the future Colloquy of Poissy. Catherine de Medici arranged the colloquy in September 1561 to resolve doctrinal differences and avoid war. The prestigious list of attendees included a papal legate, several cardinals and bishops, Michel de l'Hospital, Antoine de Navarre, Theodore de Bèze, Peter Martyr, and the eleven-year old king, Charles IX. De Coignac could have been referring to the Council of Trent that was again in session at the time of publication and whose representatives were defining the Counter-Reformation movement.

According to De Coignac, these religious debates and colloquies are wasted time because ceding even a minor doctrinal point was unacceptable:

Deliberez, pour assaut ou menace,  
A l'Antechrist ne donner lieu ne place:

---

<sup>77</sup> Romans 13:1: "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God." 1 Peter 2:13-14 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors..." Citations are taken from the New International Version (NIV) translation.

Ne luy complaire en chose aucune, & point  
A sa fureur ne ceder un seul poinct.

This message illustrates the chasm between the opposing parties. The energy for compromise fizzled and the situation remained at a tense impasse.

Similar to Grévin's *César*, these tragedies by Des Masures and De Coignac illustrate the dangers inherent in tragedy when a stage performance inspires reflection on a historical event and then challenges spectators to take action. They employed liminary material as a rhetorical strategy to avoid an ambiguous or incorrect interpretation of their *exemplum* and to guide the audience to a correct reading of the tragedy. Playwrights attempted to gain authority and credibility for their work as well as avoid conflicting interpretations by introducing the tragedy with a well-chosen verse from scripture. Olivier Millet observes, "This type of prefatory quotation evokes the practice of medieval preachers borrowing a verse from the Bible to serve as a programmatic introduction (*prothema*) to their sermons." Dramaturges imitated this practice; the title pages for biblical tragedies often included quotations from scripture, quotations that would serve to foreshadow the play's intended theme and increase interaction between author and public. Scripture provided common ground for sixteenth-century audiences, writers, and poets, and it gave tragedians a method to show common cause with the public. They cited biblical passages to effectively communicate a problem, and then offer a solution supported by the most authoritative text: the Bible.

De Coignac chose two verses to appear on the title page of the *Desconfiture de Goliath* (1550). A verse from the first book of Samuel, chapter 17, appears at the top of the page. The verse warns: "Sachent tous les habitans de la terre, que Dieu est en Israel." This warning sets up the rest of the play, a tragedy about Goliath and the Philistines (Catholics), opposed by David



and the Israelites (Protestants). A banner wrapped around the image on the title page contains the second citation located on this page. The verse from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3, is another warning: “La coignée est jà mise à la racine des arbres. Parquoytout arbre qui ne fait pas bon fruit, sera coppé et jetté au feu.” These citations exhort the audience to take a side; they must choose between the Philistines and the Israelites. Their choice will produce fruit, good or bad, and whoever produces bad fruit will be destroyed, like the Philistine champion Goliath. Through this labeling of sides – bad/good, Philistine/Israelite, Catholic/Protestant – De Coignac declares a common cause with his audience and breaks the dramatic illusion by encouraging this audience to make similar associations. In case his tragedy has drawn the audience too far into the illusion created by the play’s representation of ancient Israel, De Coignac closes the tragedy with a citation from the book of Judges, Chapter 5, warning them to heed the message and coercing them to apply the story to contemporary France.

Like De Coignac, Louis Des Masures was a Protestant writer who based the subject of his *Tragédies saintes* (1562) on ancient Israel’s king David. Des Masures also quoted scripture to increase the authority of his work, break the tragedies’ dramatic illusion, and enhance the rhetorical effectiveness of the plays. The dedicatory epistle to these tragedies concludes with a verse from Psalm 72. The warning is succinct: “Ses ennemis leicheront la terre.”<sup>78</sup> This partial quotation of the Psalm implies the reader’s familiarity with scripture. A look at Psalm 72 gives a portrait of the ideal prince: one who finds inspiration from the Bible (i.e. Reformers). The Psalm appears in many Protestant works because it prefigures Christ, a direct ancestor of David, and the perfect example of kingship. The Reformers self-identified with David; therefore, all who opposed David (Protestants) are enemies of Christ and will eventually “lick the ground,” forced into this posture of humility and submission. This plain and common expression suggests many

---

<sup>78</sup> Mysteriously, this quotation was not included in the Geneva edition of 1583.

dramaturges adapted their style to interact with a broader and more common audience. These playwrights not only embraced plain style and simple speech, they condemned those who were only interested in artistic style.

### **Interaction between Author and Audience: *Elocutio***

The Protestant playwright Louis Des Masures was exiled to Geneva and influenced by Calvin's methods and style. Des Masures defends his simple and natural style in the *Epître au Seigneur Philippe le Brun*, a dedicatory epistle to his three tragedies, the *Tragédies saintes* (1562-62). Des Masures claims he adopts a plain style because it best imitates biblical language, and because scriptures have no need of artifice. He conscientiously ignores the "délicates gens" who believe language needs embellishments. Des Masures labels the style of his contemporaries foreign, profane, and dishonest:

Moi, qui de leur complaire en cela n'ai souci  
 Pour l'histoire sacrée amplifier ainsi  
 De mots, d'inventions, de fables mensongères,  
 J'ai volontiers quitté ces façons étrangères  
 Aux profanes auteurs auxquels honneur exquis  
 Est, par bien inventer, feindre et mentir acquis. (175-80)

Des Masures contrasts the style of these "profanes auteurs" with his own style, one that reflects the pure simplicity of the faithful, the writers who communicate in spiritual truths instead of in florid and pedantic poetry. Simple, plain speech best transmits Truth and reveals the author's sincere intentions:

Et à la vérité simple, innocente et pure  
 (Pour envers le Seigneur ne faire offense dure)  
 Me suis assujetti. Car qui invente et mente  
 N'acquiert en cet endroit déshonneur seulement  
 Ains, au scandale ouvert de maint fidèle, attente  
 Encontre Dieu commetre impiété patente.

J'ai donc suivi de près et toujours je suivrai  
Ce qui est en ceci de naturel et vrai. (181-88)

In this dedicatory epistle, Des Masures captures the goodwill of the reader by claiming friendship with the audience and transparency of intention; he only desires to convey truth. The reader will perceive this truthfulness in his work, he argues, because of its clear lack of art. Although his work may be plain and simple, Des Masures comforts the reader that the absence of art and formal rhetoric can attain its own eloquence and give pleasure to the eyes and ears.

The author's choice of style and language was critical to inspire a common cause with readers and spectators. Authors adapted their *elocutio* (style) for their tragedies in an effort to interact with the public, as well as to gain their goodwill. The early tragedians, mostly Protestant authors, imitated Calvin's conception of style. Calvin applied the Ancient Greek union of simplicity and clarity, a style first adapted by Melancton for didactic works.<sup>79</sup> Calvin's sermons and exegetical lessons sought *simplicitas*, a key aspect of *sinceritas*. In addition to simplicity and sincerity, Calvin reflected the Augustinian tradition; he adapted classical rhetoric to the demands of Christian education and apologetics. Olivier Millet remarks that this style "engages the opposition between rhetoric, associated with artifice, and authenticity. Divinely inspired by a method that rejects the art of literary composition, this authenticity implies the guidance of the biblical text, and as such, is superior both in terms of true eloquence and edification."<sup>80</sup> The focus on simplicity and plain speech contradicted the style of abundance; therefore, Calvin's writing attracted much criticism from the contemporary intelligentsia. Plain speech threatened authority because the speaker or author overtly tried to manipulate the hearer or reader, in this case, the common people. According to Olivier Millet, this interaction formed a fascinating

---

<sup>79</sup> Melancton was a German humanist, educator, reformer, and theologian. He played an important role in defending Luther's views and reforming schools.

<sup>80</sup> Olivier Millet, "Calvin's Self-Awareness as Author," in *Calvin and His Influence*, p. 93.

interdependence that influenced the formulation, development, and presentation of religious doctrine.<sup>81</sup> Calvin's methods and writing strategies resembled the dynamic relationship in tragedies between dramaturge and reader, and between actor and spectator; each attempted to engage the audience and to increase interaction with the public.

Nevertheless, in spite of Des Masures assurances that he will avoid artifice and embellishment, plain speech is just another rhetorical guise. His *simplicitas* and *sinceritas* generate a powerful rhetorical element in his work by encouraging emotional and spiritual identification (e.g. the rhetorical effectiveness of Calvin's work). Moreover, plain style can evoke feelings of being present. Being present results from *energèia* (or *hypotyposis*), the rhetorical technique by which *elocutio*, an author's style, succeeds in making an object real. Plain speech in tragedy inspires readers and spectators to imagine themselves in ancient Israel. They envision the conflict between Saul and David and the civil strife to control Israel, a common metaphor for the violence between Catholics and Protestants in France. By using this rhetoric, Des Masures begins the process of establishing links between ancient Israel and sixteenth-century France, authenticates the biblical foundation of his work, and ensures the audience's sympathy by projecting sincerity and simplicity.

The *simplicitas* in these early biblical tragedies by Protestant authors contrasts the elevated style sought by authors, both Protestant and Catholic, who are influenced less by Calvin than by the *Pléiade*. Authors in this category often criticize the lack of art in the biblical tragedies. For example, successful playwrights Jacques Grévin, Robert Garnier, and Jean de La Taille all claim to commit themselves to the art of tragic style and the imitation of the ancients rather than a focus on religious polemic (and plain style) that would appeal to a broader, less refined public. They criticize the early biblical tragedies by Joachim de Coignac (*Desconfiture de*

---

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

*Goliath*, 1551), Théodore de Bèze (*Abraham sacrificant*, 1550), and Louis Des Masures (*Tragédies saintes*, 1562-63) – all Protestant authors – for imitating mystery and morality plays, medieval genres, rather than classical tragedies. In contrast, the *Pléiade* school of tragedians uphold Du Bellay's advice on drama:<sup>82</sup>

Seulement veux-je admonester celui, qui aspire à une gloire non vulgaire, s'éloigner de ces ineptes Admirateurs, fuyr ce peuple ignorant, peuple ennemy de tout rare, et antique scavoir: se contenter de peu de Lecteurs à l'exemple de celui, qui pour tous auditeurs ne demandoit que Platon.

These authors – Grévin, Garnier, La Taille – claim to remain conscious of their style and of the literary value of their work. They consider themselves writers publishing for posterity, like other humanist poets, and not simple, popular entertainers.

Among this group of playwrights is Jacques Grévin, a Protestant author and former member of the *Pléiade*. In his *Brief discours pour l'intelligence de ce théâtre* (1561), an outline of his reflections on drama, Grévin advises authors to search the Greek and Roman tragic poets, “de laquelle tous les bons poètes Tragiques ont beu, et le trésor auquel ils ont pris les richesses pour embellir leur poèmes.”<sup>83</sup> His style, however, will take a middle road. It will be neither too florid and embellished, nor too simple and vulgar:

De ceci je te laisseray le jugement, t'adverstissant que je n'ay voulu (à la manière de ceux lesquels prenant peine de s'enfler, crèvent tout en-coup) rechercher un tas de gros mots propres pour espouvanter les petits enfans : ains plustot je me suis contenté, ensuyvant les Tragiques Grecs, de ma langue, sans en emprunter une estrangère pour exprimer ma conception. (*Brief discours*, p. 7)

This language contrasts the style he will adopt for his comedies, which will imitate the naive and vulgar language of the common people. In his tragedies, Grévin seeks to identify with the art of

<sup>82</sup> Cited from Griffiths, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>83</sup> Jacques Grévin, *Brief discours pour l'intelligence de ce théâtre*, p. 6. Citation is taken from *Théâtre complet et poésies choisies de Jacques Grévin*, Lucien Pinvert, ed.

well-educated poets and to distance himself from those “amateurs de l’antiquité” who embellish too much or write bad rhymes. Grévin’s effort to achieve an elevated style, yet still use plain speech without the vulgarity, is consistent with an effort to develop a relationship with the audience, either reader or spectator.

Similar to Grévin’s approach, Jean de La Taille considers his style elevated, but not too elevated.<sup>84</sup> In a prefatory sonnet, “L’Auteur,” La Taille writes, “Saches que je ne suis de ces imitateurs, / Enfilez de mots obscurs, qui serfs admirateurs.”<sup>85</sup> La Taille’s definition of tragic style clarifies his approach to interacting with the audience. In his *De l’art de la tragédie* (1572), La Taille explains, “La Tragedie donc est une espece, et un genre de Poësie non vulgaire, mais autant elegant, beau et excellent qu’il est possible.”<sup>86</sup> Yet the title page for his tragedy, *Saül le Furieux* (1572) claims the tragedy is a “Tragedie prise de la Bible, Faicte selon l’art et à la mode des vieux Autheurs Tragiques.” La Taille chooses classical art and style to imitate antiquity and appeal to the humanists; however, he chooses a biblical subject to engage all classes. This elevated style, combined with the tragic subject (the last stand and death of king Saul), doubly touches the audience with a heroic example of suffering during civil war.

### **Interaction with Audience: The Shift toward Pathos**

The tragic situation of prolonged civil war inspired French dramaturges to aim more and more to condition an emotional response from spectators; they sought to evoke pity and compassion in

---

<sup>84</sup> La Taille was a student at the famous college de Boncourt and probably knew Jodelle. He was always protestant but he first enlisted in the royal army out of loyalty to the Bourbons and then joined Condé’s Huguénot forces in 1568. He was wounded and quit military life at the end of third war of religion. His brother was Jacques de La Taille who wrote two tragedies, *Daire* and *Alexandre*, but he died of plague at the age of twenty. Jean published *Saul* in 1572 with the preface that is known as “De l’art de la tragedie” (written between 1570-72). *La Famine* was published in 1573 with his two comedies and other works.

<sup>85</sup> Jean de La Taille, *Saül le Furieux*. Citations for Jean de La Taille will be taken from: *Saül le furieux. La Famine, ou Les Gabéonites*. Ed. Eliot Forsyth.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-2.

order to entangle the audience in civil war misery and prod them to act. Although tragedy continued to emphasize reflection on contemporary events and to engage the audience, later tragedians highlighted pathos (*pathétique*). Linking the suffering of characters with contemporary misery in France works as well as a well-styled preface or dedicatory epistle to disturb the stage-illusion and extend the dramatic world.

La Taille explains in *L'art de la tragédie*, a crucial work that offers insights into the development of the genre, that tragedy must touch and move the audience: “La vraye et seule intention d’une tragedie est d’esmouvoir et de poindre merveilleusement les affections d’un chascun.”<sup>87</sup> The emotions inspired by tragic scenes, or what Robert Garnier describes as “les cris et les horreurs de mes Tragédies,” served a strictly didactic purpose.<sup>88</sup> Character development and plot progression (centered on action) continued to await Corneille and Racine. In late sixteenth-century drama, pathos worked in conjunction with *exemplum* to manipulate emotion and impassion spectators through language.<sup>89</sup> Given their ability to inspire strong reactions, dramaturges could wield pathos as a weapon; therefore, it added to the potential threat of tragedy.

Tragedies by two of the most well-known sixteenth-century playwrights, Jean de La Taille and Robert Garnier, reveal intriguing aspects of this shift toward pathos and its partnership with *exemplum*. Their early works portray them as moderates, La Taille as a Protestant and Garnier as a Catholic, but their tragedies betray a fundamental change from an attitude of peace and understanding to promoting violence. The contingency of events, primarily the Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre, forced both authors from their moderate stances. Each author

---

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Robert Garnier, *Cornélie*. Citations from: Garnier, Robert. *Théâtre complet*, Ed. Jean-Dominique Beaudin.

<sup>89</sup> This style, while enrapturing sixteenth-century audiences, has inspired a less enthusiastic reaction from modern readers. The reasons for this disagreement will be addressed throughout the dissertation.

published a tragedy before the massacre, and each composed one immediately after. Their efforts to interact with and influence the audience uncover the effects of this catastrophe on their work and gives invaluable insight into the increased divisions in France.

Jean de La Taille published both his tragedies during the worst years of the civil wars and his work illustrates a distinct shift from previous authors of biblical tragedy: in his first tragedy, *Saül le Furieux*, he focused on the art of tragedy (*elocutio* and pathos) instead of on religious or political polemic. The composition date remains uncertain, but the majority of scholars agree on 1562-1563. La Taille mysteriously waited a decade before publishing this tragedy in 1572, and then paired it with his short treatise on drama called *L'art de la tragédie*.<sup>90</sup> The Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre inspired La Taille to compose *La Famine ou les Gabéonites* and he immediately published the tragedy in 1573. This haste appears in the quality of the work. Nevertheless, the play displays both the significant impact of the Massacre on moderate Protestants such as La Taille and the desire to prod the audience into action. In his first tragedy, he sympathetically portrayed Saul as a great monarch, unjustly afflicted by madness and illness, yet worthy of loyalty and honor. In the sequel, Saul's family, including all his children, must be sacrificed to end the famine plaguing the land and causing the people's misery.

Garnier denounces this strategy, one of sacrificial surrogate, with illustrations of suffering to inspire pity (*pathétique*). Robert Garnier published the tragedy *Porcie* after the second war of religion in 1568. The title page immediately clarifies that the tragedy is, "Porcie, Tragedie françoise, representant la cruelle et sanglante saison des guerres Civiles de Rome :

---

<sup>90</sup> He states in the preface to this essay that *Saül le Furieux* was already completed but the *De l'Art de la Tragédie* was written or revised later because it refers to a wound La Taille received at the Battle of Arnay-le-Duc in June 25, 1570.



propre et convenable pour y voir depeincte la calamité de ce temps.”<sup>91</sup> Belleau, well-known poet and member of the Pléiade, composed a sonnet to precede the play. He confirms the off-stage connection to the performance by lamenting the present sorrows. This sonnet enhances Garnier’s effort to interact with the audience through a combination of exemplum, historical analogy, and pathos.

Garnier composed a second tragedy, *Cornélie*, in 1574. He explains in a dedication to Monseigneur de Rambouillet that this tragedy is a “poeme à mon regret trop propre aux malheurs de nostre siecle.” These references to the present misfortunes evoke pity and compassion. The pathos and empathy inspired by performance lead to a revelation about contemporary events; it implicates the audience in the situation and inspires a desire to act in order to correct the cause of suffering.

Garnier and La Taille apply *pathétique* to engage the audience in a political problem. Garnier’s tragedy *Porcie*, like Grévin’s *César*, centers on the problem of kingship. Garnier based this tragedy on the moments progressing toward the suicide of Brutus’ ill-fated widow; a tragic situation set in motion by the shocking news of her husband’s death on the battlefield of Philippi at the hands of Octavius and Mark Anthony. The portrayal of Caesar in this tragedy reflect Garnier’s feelings about the government of Henry II – authoritarian and yet orderly and peaceful. Caesar’s assassins return liberty to the Roman people, but the price is retribution, disorder, and civil war.

Like Garnier and Grévin, La Taille links the principal character of his tragedy, Saul, with a king: Charles IX. In 1571, Jean de La Taille states in a liminary address, “Au Roy Charles IX,” that the troubled times inspired him to write his tragedy *Saül le Furieux*. Charles resembles Saul

---

<sup>91</sup> This title page is not found in Lebègue’s well-known critical edition of *Porcie* and *Cornélie*. See the edition at the Bibliothèque nationale de France: RES-YF-3949.

because he is “le plus malheureux Prince du monde.”<sup>92</sup> La Taille’s rendering of Saul inspires pity and compassion; the king must battle madness, David’s rebellion, and Philistine attacks. Charles IX, one could argue, had to struggle against similar opposition to his rule.

A complete reversal of position appears in his next tragedy, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites* (1573). Saul and his family no longer inspire sympathy because of their misery – they are its cause. The lesson from his tragedy is clear: France suffers from the same afflictions as the Ancient Israelites – famine and misery – and they need to punish those who caused it – the Catholic princes – until they are completely eradicated. The princes instigated all the troubles, uncovering a direct correlation between La Taille’s political treatise, the *Prince nécessaire*, and the tragedy *La Famine* (1573).<sup>93</sup> La Taille wrote the treatise to support the “cruautés utiles” that are necessary to ensure the peace. In the third chapter of the *Prince nécessaire*, La Taille approves Machiavelli’s method to exterminate the preceding Prince’s family in order to best secure a throne.<sup>94</sup> La Taille explains that a prince can and should in justified cases:

...raser quelques villes  
 Qui refuseraient paix ; et meme que les os  
 Des morts auteurs de guerre aussi n’ayent repos,  
 Que leur nom soit infame et soient exteminées  
 Leurs armes, leurs maisons et mesmes leurs lignées. (p. 274)

Florence Dobby-Poirson comments that Garnier’s tragedies, specifically *La Troade*, respond to La Taille’s threat.<sup>95</sup> Garnier, like La Taille, composed a second tragedy immediately following the Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre. His *Cornélie* appeared in 1574 and gives important insights into the impact of this tragic event on drama. Similar to his first tragedy, the second

---

<sup>92</sup> La Taille, *Saül le Furieux*, 37.

<sup>93</sup> Dobby-Poirson, *Le Pathétique dans le théâtre de Garnier*, p. 558.

<sup>94</sup> Jean de La Taille, *Œuvres de Jean de La Taille, Seigneur de Bondaroy*. Ed. René de Maulde La Clavière. Also see Chapter Six of Peter Lang’s “Machiavelli in Sixteenth-Century French Fiction.”

<sup>95</sup> See Dobby-Poirson, *op. cit.* pp. 557-58.

develops around a leading woman whose suffering and death is the focus. In contrast to his portrait in *Porcie*, Caesar is portrayed as ruthless and ambitious who causes a climate of hate and vengeance. Brutus and Cassius are the patriots; they are the new heroes of the people and the nation.<sup>96</sup> The skill in which La Taille and Garnier weave pathos and exemplum into their plots explains their popularity. Subsequent playwrights began to imitate their increased focus on pathos in tragedy and this led to the violent and bloody scenes of early seventeenth-century baroque theater.

Many years after the initial publication of his tragedies, La Taille appended an updated liminary sonnet to the 1598 edition of the plays, in which he addresses Henri de Navarre, the recently crowned Henri IV. La Taille makes explicit comparisons between Saul and Henry and warns the new king that his destiny is dangerously following that of the former king of Israel. Henry is in danger of being abandoned by God because of his apostasy: the king must recall the lesson of Saul. The striking change in interpretation from sympathy for a *malheureux prince* to a blatant warning against a later king reveals the critical importance of the paratext to understand the manner in which the author attempts to condition the audience for a specific reception of the tragedy. The conditioning creates understanding and develops a growing need to react to stage events as the spectators respond to the performance. Interaction with the public was critical for this reception. Theater spectators, of course, would not be introduced to the published liminary material during a true stage production.

---

<sup>96</sup> Eliot Forsyth argues that Garnier was targeting the military captains and provincial leaders instead of the king himself. Neither is Garnier arguing for rebellion, he is showing the consequences of tyranny. Divine vengeance will put an end to tyranny.

### Interaction between Author and Audience: Prologues and Monologues

Prologues and opening monologues reflect the rhetorical elements found in this literary material: prefaces, arguments, epistles, and other prefatory verses. All civil-war tragedies except La Taille's *Saül le Furieux* (1572) open with either a prologue or a long monologue, and sometimes with both.<sup>97</sup> A prologue or monologue reveals the effort to engage the audience by breaking dramatic illusion, rather than the effort to represent and develop plot and character by building illusion, thus one reason why sixteenth-century tragedy has received much criticism for lack of development and action. In spite of this criticism, these literary devices (prologues and monologues) serve a critical purpose. The prologues and monologues give the stage to one actor who communicates directly with the audience, instructing and preparing them how to interpret the upcoming tragedy on this stage.

Since the *didascalies* (stage directions) are rarely found in these published tragedies, little information exists about the actors' movements and their methods of delivery. However, an actor who delivers a prologue or long opening monologue would position himself or herself in such a manner to face and speak directly to the audience. A solitary actor on an empty stage, removed from the scene's illusory space in order to deliver a monologue, would break the illusion and create a more intimate connection with the audience. The author depends on this connection to persuade the audience and to evoke emotions.<sup>98</sup>

Late sixteenth-century dramaturges found a model for this structure in the work of ancient Roman philosopher and tragedian, Seneca, who preceded all his tragedies with a prologue. The prologue served Seneca as a rhetorical and didactic device. In his prologues, the plot remained unexposed and instead revealed the moral situation. He highlighted a moral

---

<sup>97</sup> This tragedy is a rare sixteenth-century example of a play beginning *in medias res*.

<sup>98</sup> See Weimann "Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in Theater" for applicable conclusions on actor positioning and stage illusion.

problem in the prologue to keep it independent of the events and scenes in the tragedy in case the audience might fail to comprehend the play's meaning. This strategy reveals the tragedy's focus on a moral argument – political, religious, social – and not on the tragedy's characters. It also uncovers the reason for sixteenth-century tragedians' lack of concern about plot and character development.

Like other sixteenth-century playwrights, Louis Des Masures continued this tradition; all three of his tragedies contain a prologue and epilogue. Civil-war tragedies published after Des Masures contain no written prologue, but instead switch to a long opening monologue by one of the characters. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that these plays would open with an extemporaneous prologue by one of the actors to introduce more clearly the reason for staging the play. In spite of the prologue's sacrifice to the monologue, the opening monologue serves the same rhetorical and didactic purpose – engage spectators in the tragedy's moral or in its propaganda instead of in the characters and action.

In conjunction with focusing on moral and propaganda, Louis Des Masures' prologues continue to stress the truth of the representation. The prologue to the first tragedy, *David combattant*, informs the audience, "Car combien que n'orrez ni fable ni mensonge / Mais pure vérité."<sup>99</sup> And in the second tragedy, *David triomphant*, Des Masures feels the need to reemphasize this message: "Il vera au surplus que l'action présente / Le naturel en soi de cela représente."<sup>100</sup> It is critical for Des Masures to transmit this message to stage audiences for the same reasons highlighted in this chapter's sections on his dedicatory epistle, *Epître au Seigneur Philippe le Brun*. Notably, Des Masures must establish the authority of his representation in order to give credence to the analogies and *exempla* in the tragedy. The strategic placement of

---

<sup>99</sup> Des Masures, *David combattant*, 15-16.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

these instructions solidifies the tragedy as authority on biblical exegesis of the civil war between Saul and David.

After insisting on truthfulness his tragedy about Saul and David, Des Masures gives a definition of tragedy, a definition that highlights the imitation (*imitatio*) of antiquity, and not his own art or inventiveness.<sup>101</sup> Des Masures, through the voice of the actor, instructs the audience:

Que les poètes vains veulent qu'on nomme et die,  
 Suivant l'antiquité, du nom de Tragédie.  
 Le tragique au théâtre induit devant les yeux  
 Les personnes des rois, des princes, des faux dieux. (*David triomphant*, 35-39)

In the prologue to *David fugitif*, he connects this truthfulness with the spectators' own feelings:

“Qui n'est mensonge ou fable ains vérité entière / Vous avez, je le vois, d'affections pareilles.”

The prologue breaks the dramatic illusion and invites the spectators to engage personally with the representation. Des Masures' prologues adopt a lexicon of exchange and implicate the audience in the play's success. The prologue in Des Masures' tragedies, for example, often establishes complicity between the author and the audience and addresses them directly.

The first two lines of the prologue in *David triomphant* inform the audience of their crucial role as spectators: “Vous attendez de nous, de vous nous attendons / De plaisir à plaisir les réciproques.”<sup>102</sup> Spectators will profit from the play and find pleasure – only if they fulfill their role as a faithful audience. The actor warns the spectators:

Si donc vous désirez qu'un tel plaisir vous plaise.  
 Vous nous rendrez ce bien que sans bruit et à l'aise  
 Nous soyons écoutés, ensemble ayons de quoi  
 Nous contenter de vous et silence coi. (10-13)

<sup>101</sup> Unlike many tragedians of the period, this is Des Masures' only reference to the art of tragedy.

<sup>102</sup> Des Masures, *David combattant*, 1-2.

The conditional statement beginning with the if clause (*Si donc vous désirez*) ensures the audience will have a role in the tragedy. What exactly is the role?

The lone actor speaks for the acting troupe, and for the author, when he informs the spectators: “*Nous vous requérons donc faire votre devoir / De vous rendre attentifs et qu’il nous soit loisible.*”<sup>103</sup> The audience has an active duty to engage in the representation and to empathize with David’s (Protestant’s) persecution by Saul (Catholic and royal authority). The prologue to *David fugitif* explains to the audience that they have brought something from their homes not required for their duty as spectators: their tongues. To control the tongue is to dominate all language during the performance. It ensures mastery over communication between stage and audience, and over the play’s illusory space.

As has been noted, Des Masures primarily uses the prologue to build a relationship with the audience. He builds complicity by addressing spectators as *Seigneurs* in the first play, as *Seigneurs et Dames* in the second, and then a more general *hommes et femmes* in the third to show how the space between stage and spectator can be manipulated, and emphasize the integration of stage characters and audience members into a united community. This effort at integration is clear in *David fugitif*, where the actor who recites the prologue claims to be just one of them – the spectators - he will also listen quietly and attentively. He claims: “*Moi aussi bien que vous, sans plus ouïr me faire / Je vais pour quelque temps écouter et me taire / Vous me verrez encor. Je ne veux aller loin.*”<sup>104</sup> Now that these roles are clarified, the Prologue begins to reestablish the dramatic illusion in order to reconnect the audience to the tragedy:

...quelqu’un de vous  
Verra en cette riche et triomphante entrée  
De dames d’Israël une troupe accoutrée  
De somptueux atours, il orra leurs chansons. (28-31)

<sup>103</sup> Des Masures, *David triomphant*, 66-67.

<sup>104</sup> Des Masures, *David fugitif*, 51-53.

The actor quits the stage after this recitation to cede his place to David, who also delivers a lengthy monologue. The sequence is critical: the prologue has broken the dramatic illusion, captured the audience's attention and goodwill, built a relationship of responsibility and trust that is transferred to David as dramatic illusion is being reestablished and David takes center stage. During his monologue, David holds a position midway between the illusory space of the stage and the space reserved for the spectators that remains grounded in the late sixteenth-century. In all three plays, Des Masures employs these techniques and scripts David to enter following the prologue so that he directly addresses the audience.

Although Des Masures relies so heavily on a prologue used in conjunction with an opening monologue by the protagonist David to interact with the audience, other civil-war tragedies (except *Horace Trigémine* by d'Aigaliers), cut the prologue and leave only a long opening monologue by one of the tragedy's characters. This tradition of using an opening monologue continues to the end of the sixteenth century. By the early seventeenth century, however, the monologue disappears and is replaced by an opening dialogue. For example, Corneille's *Le Cid* and Racine's *Phèdre* begin with dialogues to cast spectators immediately into the action. Intriguingly, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century comedies, on the other hand, retain the prologue.

An opening monologue is useful for exposition; it conveys information, explains the situation, and gives clues to interpretation. Classical models provide five primary methods of expository address:



1. A monologue by a minor character who remains outside the action of the play, and who does not reappear – often a supernatural figure. This method was popular with the Greek dramaturge Euripides and the Roman Seneca.
2. A monologue by one of the characters in the tragedy, which was popular with Euripides and Seneca.
3. A dialogue, either between two of the protagonists or between one of the main characters and a confidant. This was common in Sophocles and also used by Grévin in *César*.
4. A dialogue between one of the protagonists and the chorus – rare in ancient tragedy, but often used in French tragedy. The chorus and their role in sixteenth-century tragedy will be the subject of the next chapter.
5. The chorus alone, used only by Aeschylus and not imitated by Renaissance tragedians.

Exposition was common in this early period of sixteenth-century French tragedy, yet became less and less used in later periods because the audience was presumed to know the story and not in need of this lengthy, static background information. Following the example of Seneca, Renaissance tragedians used exposition for rhetorical purposes rather than for simply conveying information. The rhetoric in exposition builds upon the persuasive foundation already constructed in the prefatory material. In sixteenth-century tragedy, the character who recites the exposition does not inform spectators about the *déroulement* of the plot because the tragedy's title and the protagonist's name would already relay this information. Unlike seventeenth-century tragedy, it is unusual to be introduced to all the characters in the first act. The first act normally remains brief and fills a protatic (introductory) role that is critical in Renaissance tragedy

because these are not tragedies of action or of psychology, but rather performances that focus on dialogue and debate about the most crucial issues of the civil and religious wars.

A protatic character usually gives this expository address: a retrospective narrative to tell the audience where they are in a familiar story. For tragedies that try to maintain stricter ties to ancient tragedy, the prologue is given by a character who takes part in the action, and who at least pretends to be unaware of the audience, even if the speech seems to address them indirectly. This character usually appears once and could be a minor character, or a ghost, or a Greek fury, depending on the rhetorical purpose of the exposition. This inclination for the supernatural has been examined by Gillian Jondorff. She connects this protatic role and the use of rhetoric.

Jondorff explains:

It is the humanist playwright's confidence and ease in the use of rhetoric which enable him to employ, in the service of exposition, such bold and improbable devices as ghosts, Furies, or ritualized dialogue with the Chorus. The result often constitutes not only a triumph of rhetoric, but an elegant solution to a problem over which many playwrights have stumbled. (*French Renaissance Tragedy*, p. 43)

The problem mentioned by Jondorff is how the playwright might foreshadow the intrigue, engage the audience, and maintain the rhetorical design of the tragedy.<sup>105</sup> The opening act, and hence the opening monologue, is an important part in the design of the play and is a critical piece of the larger rhetorical pattern.

Surprisingly, a protatic character does not open civil-war tragedies, and this absence is striking because of the common use of this character in other tragedies of the same period. Yet instead of a simple expository address to foreshadow the action, these tragedies try to build a relationship with the audience and sympathy for the protagonist. Therefore, the protagonist, or a character sympathetic to the protagonist, enters first on stage instead of a protatic character who has no involvement nor personal interest in the outcome of the play.

---

<sup>105</sup> Jondorf, *French Renaissance tragedy*, p. 43.

The reason for this absence, and choice of introduction, becomes clearer when understanding that a character is the mouthpiece of ideas; therefore, the actor's position on stage and how the actor enters the scene is crucial, not only for dramatic illusion, but also for the protagonist's *hamartia* (fatal flaw). Hamartia is crucial because the protagonist shares it with the audience; they recognize their situation in that of the protagonists – the reason tragedians take so many pains to establish the tragedy as an exemplum. Robert Weimann clarifies:

Here what we might read as the autonomy of the tragic subject is, in fact, primarily a relation between the action of a protagonist and the cultural milieu of an audience. To insist that hamartia refers primarily to the subjectivity of the tragic protagonist is to elevate the audience to a position of moral and ethical superiority, and to miss the complex transaction which is taking place between culturally over-determined spectator and stage representation. (*Shakespeare*, p. 9)

A successful tragedy evokes the compassion of the spectators and causes them to sympathize with the protagonist's dilemma. The protagonist's dilemma is the essence of tragedy, for tragedy enacts a conflict, centered on a human subject, who is enmeshed in webs of social, political, economic, and psychological forces. The protagonist generally acts in ignorance of the larger context of his actions, the context of which the audience is knowledgeable. The protagonist's ignorance, contrasted by the audience's knowledge, builds dramatic irony (tension and interest) and dramatic illusion (belief in the reality of on-stage events). The author may temporarily break the dramatic illusion by using prefatory material – sonnets, epigrams, dedicatory epistles, arguments, and treatises – or by prologues, epilogues, and monologues – all sending a crucial message: on-stage fiction and off-stage reality are connected.

The protagonist's ignorance of these connections betrays a fatal flaw (*hamartia*), which effectively causes the tragedy. *Hamartia* is not a character flaw (a common misconception), *hamartia* is an action - something the protagonist does. This fatal flaw, like tragedy in general,

has roots in the larger domain of culture, the communal fears or desires. Early modern tragedy encourages spectators to become involved in the on-stage action, in the character's fears and desires. The audience's recognition of the flaw and of the conflict's source is crucial. In liminary material, prologues, and monologues dramatists evoke the audience's sympathies and provide them with tools to interpret the sources of on- and off-stage conflict. Interpretation is a key to authority and power and threatens established order when used by the public. The protagonist fails to comprehend and interpret events properly, hence the protagonist's, and by extension, sixteenth-century France's tragic dilemma.

Dilemma, according to Aristotle, is the positioning of the protagonist, the represented community, and the audience between two choices of equal value. The dilemma can relate to a social, political, or religious problem. If one choice is clearly right and one clearly wrong, it is simple melodrama. Thus, *harmatia* is the result of a complex situation represented in the drama. It is this situation and the impossible or paradoxical nature of dilemma to which the audience responds.<sup>106</sup> The choices can represent divisions or contradictions within the social formation itself and evoke crucial questions: kingship, religious doctrine, revolt.

For the stage, these problems are exposed through the rhetorical practice of *prosopeia*, or impersonation. *Prosopeia* is an exercise in the portrayal of mood. The student tries to put himself completely inside a character and imagine what they would have said or done in a specific situation. Gillian Jondorff explains that characters in a tragedy are almost allegorical and serve as the mouthpiece of an *idée maîtresse*.<sup>107</sup> A speech or monologue is the expression of one feeling; sixteenth-century tragedy makes no attempt at progression from mood to mood and therefore

---

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>107</sup> Jondorff, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

works as a type of example.<sup>108</sup> *Prosopeia* is commonly seen in the long and static monologues that are found in a large percentage of tragedies of this period. In a study on rhetoric and style in French tragedy, Schérer explains, “La fonction essentielle du monologue est de permettre l’expression d’un sentiment...Le monologue permet au dramaturge, non seulement de faire connaître les sentiments de son héros – facilité que lui offre tout dialogue – mais de les chanter.”<sup>109</sup> The opening monologue clearly reveals this practice.

In Grévin’s *César*, the first scene of the play is a monologue by Caesar, who is the only character on the stage, similar to a prologue. The tragedy centers on Caesar and his opening monologue needs to unveil the problem. His soliloquy reveals an internal conflict and he poses the questions that will drive the plot: “Ne serai-je obéi? Ne donnerai-je fin / Au vouloir obstiné de ce peuple mutin?”<sup>110</sup> The audience has no need for more background. Spectators know the story. They know Brutus and other Senators will kill Caesar. They only need to know the problem: Is Caesar a tyrant who deserves assassination? Moreover, Grévin has already posited Henry II, as well as the French monarchy, as Caesar. Then the question becomes: Does Henry II, or any French king, merit regicide?

Grévin appears to be painting Caesar as a tyrant. Caesar refers to himself: “O premier Empereur!” The expression is unusual because he uses the vocative case to address himself. The exclamation shows self-absorption. Next, he admits his greatest fear is not death, but being disobeyed (or losing his glory). “Ainsi le plus souvent on se rend serviteur / De ceux desquels on doit être le seul seigneur.”<sup>111</sup> *Guillemets* mark off the antithesis master/servant to signal it as a

---

<sup>108</sup> Griffiths, *The dramatic technique of Antoine de Montchrestien*, p. 76-7.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>110</sup> Grévin, *César*, 17-18.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

*sentence*, an important or proverbial passage. The confession tells spectators Caesar is most concerned with his power.

Caesar refers to himself in the third person, like in his own commentaries. Nevertheless, he clarifies the problem by repeating three times the opening phrase “Aborder un César.” We can imagine the actor facing the crowd and asking: Could you overthrow a great leader? Caesar lists his past triumphs, the victories, and the conquests – an amplification of his deeds. Caesar’s glory has extended Rome’s greatness; for what is a Rome without a Caesar? His death is Rome’s and her ruins will be a future example: “A ton heur et ton nom servira de tombeau: / Et ne restra sinon que ton idole errante / Pour servir d’une fable à l’âge survivante, / Dont tu seras la proie et le riche butin...”<sup>112</sup> Caesar’s monologue links greatness to the ruler. Then what is a nation with a king subject to madness?

Characters give speeches throughout the play that are themselves movement and action and advance the plot; they advance a message or an idea more than they develop character. The characters seem isolated because of their long speeches. In contrast, a Racinian character displays clear changes in mood and behavior in interaction with other characters and with events. Characters in humanist tragedy are not allegorical, but they do represent certain themes or ideas; each person playing a part of an intellectual or moral position. Displaying many similarities to a Racinian tragedy is Jean de La Taille’s *Saül le Furieux* (1573), yet the play remains rooted in late sixteenth-century dramatic art and techniques. Similar to Racine’s tragedies, La Taille’s play begins *in medias res* and there is neither prologue nor opening monologue. However, the play closes with a long monologue, similar to an epilogue, by the protagonist, David. La Taille, however, is unique among sixteenth-century tragedians to adopt this strategy.

---

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-88.

The Renaissance was an age of dialogue and debate and both readers and spectators of tragedies found themselves targeted as both the subject and object of the play's discourse. As the subject, the audience was implicated in contemporary events; they became the object because dramaturges bombarded spectators with a call to engage in the on-stage action, a representation of off-stage events. In his *Art de la Tragédie*, La Taille argues a tragedy should be constructed "de sorte qu'elle change, transforme, manie, et tourne l'esprit des escoutans deca dela..." Authors assumed spectators would learn from the message in the play, which would directly inspire certain patterns of thought and behavior, because, above all, humanist tragedy is didactic: It contains a political or religious message, developed out of a thesis or problem, which forms the intellectual foundation of the play.

Ronsard explains in the preface to his epic poem *La Franciade*, "La Tragédie et Comédie, lesquelles sont du tout didascaliques et enseignantes."<sup>113</sup> Dedications, sonnets, arguments, and woodcuts set the stage to direct the reader's attention toward a revelation about contemporary events. Furthermore, they betray social tensions that contributed to civil conflict in France: the problem of kingship (tyranny and just rule), of religion (Reform and the Papacy), of society (family and community). Arguments against royal and religious authority often proceed to a subversive call to action for a new power – Reformers, nobles, or true Catholics – to reestablish legitimate authority because the current rule has betrayed traditional foundations of power. Author's invitations to spectators and readers to engage in patterns of thought and action would place them on one side or another of the great political and religious debates of the Renaissance and Reformation. The concerted effort to prohibit theater suggests the threat of tragedy; performances could influence events by engaging readers and spectators. Tragedy was

---

<sup>113</sup> Pierre de Ronsard, *La Franciade, deuxième partie*. This citation comes from the 1587 preface to the *Franciade* published after his death by Cl. Binet.

not simply the reproduction or reflection of events; it broke the dramatic illusion of the performance to use the play's characters and plot as precedent. In the next chapter, an analysis of the chorus suggests its role as breaking dramatic illusion and establishing historical precedence, a continuation of the author's voice intervening in the play to inspire interaction with the public.



## Chapter 2

### The Chorus and Stage-Illusion

Sixteenth-century French tragedy provides an intriguing phenomenon: These playwrights expanded and emphasized the role of the chorus, a stronger reliance on this role not reflected in Ancient Greek and Roman tragedies, sources the French playwrights imitated. Although choral singing appeared in Ancient Greek tragedies, the number of verses given to the chorus in sixteenth-century French tragedy exceeds the part it played in Greek or Roman theater. How important is the chorus in sixteenth-century tragedy? In *Adonias* (1586) the chorus's parts are longer than all other parts combined. Other tragedies do not achieve this level of choral saturation; nevertheless, choral interludes account for twenty-two percent of the lines in *David combattant* (1562), seventeen percent in *Saül le Furieux* (1572) and fifteen percent in the *Thébaïde* (1584). The role of the chorus, however, will disappear from French tragedy by the middle of the seventeenth century, the once vital role becoming a liability. That links the sixteenth-century chorus to its historical context, and signals an intimate connection to French tragedy's birth during the civil and religious wars of the last half of the sixteenth century.

This chapter aims to analyze the ways in which the choral function in sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies is problematic and at times subversive. It is problematic because too often the treatment of sixteenth-century chorus is rote and lacks critical interest, largely due to confusion in modern scholarship about the exact nature of the chorus' role. Nevertheless, by showing how the chorus increases spectators' interest and engagement, I will demonstrate that choruses are essential to civil-war tragedy, further disqualifying their label as bland and uninteresting on-stage commentators. The choruses are at times subversive because they analyze and interpret civil and

religious conflict for the audience. For example, the link between choral interlude and psalm singing in early Protestant tragedies makes the chorus inherently threatening. Catholic playwrights imitate this rhetorical element in the chorus when they begin to dominate the genre near end of the civil and religious wars.

In civil-war tragedy, French playwrights manipulate the chorus to provoke engagement from the audience (both readers and spectators) and exhort them to reflect on the performance. The chorus communicates with the audience. This role uncovers a purpose for Renaissance tragedy in addition to pleasing and instructing; it encourages the audience to engage in the sixteenth-century religious and political concerns being staged. Historical and biblical episodes are material for commentary and analysis (breaking stage illusion) instead of material only for performance and spectacle (creating stage illusion). Authors give the interpretive lines most often to the chorus, and any such commentary on the action disengages the audience from the stage-illusion and engages them in the interpretation.

### **The Choral Interlude: Interrupting Stage-Illusion**

The chorus has a talent for versatility in sixteenth-century tragedy; it takes on a role more complex than singing, dancing, and recapitulating the action. Inhabited by the chorus is a space between stage and spectator that becomes the crucial site of communication between author and audience. A choral interlude empowers the playwright with flexibility to break the stage-illusion, manipulate the story, and further engage the audience in the play's meaning. It is hard to connect the play to the public without the chorus, and its role provides evidence for the direction in which the author guides, instructs, and prods spectators. Visual propaganda – images, woodcuts, and broadsides – have been the source of much scholarship; however, oral propaganda, like the

chorus, has remained misunderstood because it is largely undocumented. Other studies have attempted to clarify the chorus's function in tragedy, but the research remains inconclusive.

The reason for uncertainty is the absence of precise written rules for sixteenth-century tragedy, and the confusing variety of the chorus's roles. Gillian Jondorff describes this versatile role: "Creating atmosphere or local color, shaping and pointing the themes of the play, speaking as the voice of morality or as *vox populi*, the eloquent, multifarious chorus gave humanist dramatists a flexible and diversely exploited resource."<sup>114</sup> The chorus could emphasize a moral, illuminate a historical reference, establish setting, serve to transition between scenes, engage in dialogue to warn characters – and audience – of dangerous consequences, or implicate characters in the tragic hero's downfall. It is unsurprising the chorus remains problematic when seeing this remarkable versatility.

Regardless of its confusing variety in tragedy, the choral unit has one unifying function: the intermediary or bridge between actors and spectators. The chorus does not passively relay information, but actively engages with spectators by interpreting events and creating community brother and sisterhood, often by group singing. Françoise Charpentier explains in her research on humanist tragedy that, "Il [the chorus] se définit par un point de vue qu'il représentera, au nom de l'auteur absent. C'est une règle générale que ce chœur ait la sympathie de l'auteur et du public."<sup>115</sup> In this manner, the chorus could expand the dramatic world from the stage to contemporary Europe. The chorus bridges frontiers in time and space to connect the sixteenth-century French audience to Ancient Israel, Greece, and Rome. Since these tragedies are consciously didactic, they lose dramatic force (hence contemporary scholarship's disapproval), but playwrights willingly sacrifice this dramatic flow to increase its connection to the audience

---

<sup>114</sup> Jondorff, *French Renaissance Tragedy*, p. 86.

<sup>115</sup> Charpentier, *Pour une lecture de la tragédie humaniste*, p. 37.

through the chorus, who encourages the public to engage in the performance by singing, conversing, and commenting about and upon the stage-world.

In classical antiquity, playwrights identified the critical terrain between stage and audience, and often personally trained and led the chorus to control this space. In Book XVIII of his *Poetics*, Aristotle explained the chorus should retain the qualities of a character, and their songs should integrate into the action to enable plot progression. In Roman tragedy, the *cantica*, the Latin chorus, played a broader and more crucial role, one more similar to sixteenth-century tragedy. Because of this noticeable difference between Greek and Roman chorus, theater scholar Pierre Grimal believed Roman preferences were not inherited from Greek drama; they illustrated a national taste native to Italian and Latin theater for choral episodes.<sup>116</sup> Both Greek and Roman tragedy were well known by Renaissance writers. Sixteenth-century tragedians, however, depended on the widely read and circulated *Ars Poetica* by Horace, the most renowned Roman lyric poet during the reign of Augustus, as their primary, classical source for the art of drama. Sixteenth-century playwrights misinterpreted a crucial passage from this source about the role of the chorus, and the mistake had intriguing consequences. Horace explained in the treatise: “Actoris partis chorus officiumque virile / Defendat.”<sup>117</sup> Renaissance poets mistook *Actoris* for *Autoris* and writers adopted the chorus as the voice of the author instead of employing it to fulfill the role of an actor, as Aristotle recommended.

Jacques Peletier du Mans was responsible for the first French translation of Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, which he published in 1541. After years of studying the subject, Peletier compiled an original *Art poétique français* (1555), where he defined the purpose of the chorus in contemporary theater. The chorus, he explained, “doit tousjours être du parti de l’auteur: c’est à

---

<sup>116</sup> Jacquot, Odon, and Bacquet, *Les tragédies de Sénèque et le théâtre de la Renaissance*, p. 3.

<sup>117</sup> Cited from Griffiths, *The dramatic technique of Antoine de Montchrestien*, p. 143.

dire qu'il doit donner à connoître le sens et le jugement du poète: parler sentencieusement, craindre les dieux, reprendre les vices, menacer les méchants, ammonester à la vertu."<sup>118</sup> In the new and developing genre of French tragedy, the chorus originated as the *porte-parole* of the author. This crucial mouthpiece, interpreted the tragedy for the audience to increase comprehension and engagement.

Sixteenth-century tragedians took advantage of this latitude and adapted the chorus for a variety of functions and roles. Typically, there was an absence of scenery on the early modern stage and authors sometimes used the chorus for narrative description and exposition. Through narrative, the chorus created a certain atmosphere, a sort of spiritual decoration or scenery in which the action took place. They resembled a *musique de scène* whose leitmotifs gave a reference point for the critical moments or waypoints of the play. The chorus would narrate tragic events, moralize, and reflect on the moral, ethical, religious, or political implications of the action. Much of the message of the chorus would be transferred to prefaces or secondary characters of seventeenth-century tragedy. Cutting out the chorus resulted in intriguing consequences. Most importantly, it enabled better plot progression and stronger stage-illusion, encouraging the audience to be captured by the story's movement and drama. These differences will be discussed in the conclusion to the dissertation.

Meanwhile, attacking this confusion of choral functions in his work on sixteenth-century tragedies, Griffiths divides choruses into two classes: a composite character (character-chorus) that takes part in the dialogue, or a lyric interlude that remains impersonal, making general moral statements and references to the plot.<sup>119</sup> Some playwrights use separate choruses for each role, while others employ the same chorus to fulfill both functions. In initial sixteenth-century

---

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

tragedies, the character-chorus often teams with one character to echo their opinions and emotions. It gives the author an opportunity to expand on a *lieu commun*, or a philosophic subject, rather than the progression of a mood. This stylization matches the outlook of humanist education in rhetoric. Unlike in the seventeenth century, sixteenth-century tragedies subordinate *vraisemblance* to style and rhetoric.<sup>120</sup> By the early seventeenth-century, the interlude and character-chorus are unspecified groups labeled “chœur,” who have no attachment to a specific character. They make few references to the plot and their lines echo general moral statements. Both types of chorus function in the space between play and reality, and both comment upon either the stage-action or stage-characters to interpret them for the spectators.<sup>121</sup> Analyzing this stage commentary may be a way to recreate stage movements and directions in the absence of written stage directions by playwrights.

Location and meter distinguish the character-chorus and interlude chorus; they form a striking contrast to the rest of the tragedy in structure and language, creating a further separation between actors and chorus in relation to the audience. The interlude chorus assists the transition between episodes and usually appears alone on-stage at the end of scenes or acts. They can also appear in the middle of acts when the scene changes, again taking complete control of the stage. The character-chorus’s location varies during the play, and its appearance can give insights into interpreting scenes, especially if the chorus remains attached to one character throughout the play, whose speech patterns and meter the chorus will often mimic. Unfortunately, tragedians fail to note *didiscalies* (stage directions) with any consistency. We are in the dark about when characters enter and exit and it is guesswork to deduce which characters are on the stage during any scene. Logic says the chorus would have to overhear the monologue or dialogue to comment

---

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>121</sup> Griffiths passes over the role of the character-chorus, a mistake, since this chorus speaks with the characters and to the audience.

upon it, or would have to observe the scene to interpret it for the audience. This logic provides good evidence that the chorus remains on the stage during the whole play, which would also strengthen their legitimacy as approved commentators since they are the only group with knowledge of all events and characters, making them an omniscient narrator. The chorus would not disturb the scene and characters rarely acknowledge its members. The lack of acknowledgement emphasizes their role as intermediary between stage and spectators, breaking dramatic illusion and engaging the audience to reflect on the scene. An omniscient chorus sways the audience to agree with their analysis and interpretation.

Sixteenth-century scholars did engage in some debate about the role of the chorus. In his *Art poétique françois* (1597), D'Aigaliers asserts that each act should end with a chorus, except for the fifth, the final act. He also criticizes Garnier for introducing a chorus into the middle of the act as an interlude or a character-chorus.<sup>122</sup> Unlike his other tragedies, Garnier's *Bradamante* contains no chorus. In the play's prefatory *Argument*, the author admits this absence could cause some confusion. Garnier explains:

Et parce qu'il n'y a point de Chœurs, comme aux tragédies précédentes, pour la distinction des actes, celui qui voudroit représenter cette Bradamante sera, s'il luy plaist, adverty d'user d'entremets, et les interposer entre les actes pour ne les confondre, et ne mettre en continuation de propos ce qui requiert quelque distance de temps.

From this statement, Garnier betrays worry about possibly confusing one scene from the next. Nevertheless, he must feel the chorus interrupts the action, instead of providing a smooth transition, if he decides to delete the role from the play. Cutting the chorus provides Garnier a solution to facilitate plot progression, thus enabling stage-illusion and emphasizing story instead of drawing the audience's attention from the action to the commentary on the action. It is

---

<sup>122</sup> Pierre de Laudun D'Aigaliers, *Art poétique françois*, livre v, ch. Vii.

unsurprising that Garnier has received the highest praise from theater scholars for the quality of his tragedies.

Unlike Garnier's *Bradamante*, the chorus typically takes center stage at the end of each act and often appears during scenes of sixteenth-century tragedies. In the biblical tragedy *Desconfiture de Goliath* (1550), the chorus (*Cantique des filles d'Israël*) appears only at the conclusion of the performance. The structure of the tragedy resembles the order of liturgy and worship; the chorus opens and closes their performance with a doxology and benediction. They recall, "Dieu nous a donné matiere...Ne demeurez pas arriere: / Car ceste journée entière, / Est dediée à son Nom." The command resembles a call to worship and the chorus leads this religious service, emphasizing their role as go-between for the audience. A priestly image legitimates the chorus's commentary on the tragedy, a biblical tragedy, and sanctifies their insight into analogies between Ancient Israel and sixteenth-century France.

The role of these choral episodes in Des Masures' trilogy, *Tragédies saintes* (1562), is more complex than in other civil-war tragedies. The choruses in Des Masures' tragedies fulfill all the various roles previously discussed. The tragedies have no formal divisions into acts and scenes; however, *cantiques* (hymns of praise) divide the play into sections and facilitate transitions between scenes, evidence that their primary function is interlude. On the other hand, the designated choruses associate with specific groups: Philistines and Israelites. In the tragedies, Des Masures employs a *troupe* and *demi-troupe* of Israelite soldiers to converse about significant events in the tragedy. Then, they sing a *cantique* to conclude each discussion. The *troupe* and *demi-troupe* of Philistines follows a similar structure and explains their position for the audience. The symmetry forms a double-plot structure that aids debate and clarifies the conflict. Good evidence from the liminary material and prologues (seen in Chapter One of this study) indicates



that this debate between Philistine and Israelite provides a comparison with the religious conflict in France. The continuous distraction by the choruses amplifies the importance of commentary on the action, while obstructing dramatic progression and breaking the flow of the action.

The chorus's steady appearance reveals its importance to the dramatic structure of sixteenth-century tragedy. Understanding this relationship is critical for comprehending the chorus' complexity as well as for gaining insight into the tragedy. For example, the chorus in Grèvin's *César* (1561) is the only constant in the play; the chorus' lines remain in octosyllabic verse, while versification for other characters varies. The chorus' consistency – they speak at a steady pace of twelve lines per soldier in the first chorus – gives the play a more concrete structure and highlights the chorus's importance. The structure of the tragedy forms a chiasmus: characters are introduced in succession and then exit in reverse order after Caesar's assassination, which occurs at the end of the third act, the symbolic and literal center of the play. The chorus interprets each act for the audience. It reviews the most important events, clarifies the morals, and either condemns or praises certain actions. Partiality calls into question the opinions of all other characters who take strong positions about Caesar's assassination. The chorus, however, maintains one foot inside and one foot outside this debate, gaining the audience's trust as a less involved party, yet this seeming impartiality is also problematic, as will be seen.

### **Interaction with the Audience**

It is clear from these examples that the chorus aims its lines at spectators. Regardless of the chorus' role, it is used by playwrights to interact with the audience. By speaking directly to the audience, the chorus disengages them from the stage-illusion and expands the dramatic world from the stage to the larger context inhabited by the spectators – Paris, France, Europe. They can

inspire the audience's moral judgment and sympathies, and engage them in the outcome of the tragedy. One effective strategy the chorus uses to engage the audience is to ask them questions.

Grévin's *César* illustrates how questions engage the audience and expand the dramatic vision from the stage to external events. Four Roman soldiers, veterans of Caesar's army, compose the chorus. At the end of the first act, a soldier asks, "Où est la fureur de nos ans?" The question echoes Villon's famous "Où sont les neiges d'antan?" Rome has lost its former glory and this question inspires a reflection on events. But on which events? The question is a non-sequitur; it does not apply to the context of the story. Rome is at peace, and should be full of pride and glory for the extensive Empire, the popular Caesar leading it. The civil war between Caesar and Pompey caused much suffering, yet the struggle is resolved. The question relates better to contemporary events in France. Unlike Rome, where a great leader has taken charge of a now great Empire, France has lost its Caesar – Henry II – according to the author's dedication.<sup>123</sup> France's power and influence are declining compared to its rivals the Holy Roman Empire and Spain. France's current troubles are the direction in which the question and the chorus guide the audience. By these questions, the chorus establishes the civil and religious troubles in France as a meta-drama, an off-stage plot that inspires deep reflection.

Questions that inspire debate drive the drama as well as the meta-drama. Is Caesar a legitimate emperor? Is he a tyrant? By questions, the chorus problematizes the two positions – legitimate kingship and tyranny – that have caused, are causing, and will cause civil conflict both in Ancient Rome and in France. The chorus encourages reflection on events and on how these examples apply to their lives. They ask:

---

<sup>123</sup> In the dedication to Claude de France, the second daughter of Henry II and Catherine de Medici, the author explains he chose to dedicate the tragedy to her because she was the daughter of a great king, one who resembles the first Roman emperor in "prouesses, vertus, et humanité." Grévin composed the tragedy in 1560, the year following Henry's unexpected death.

Pensez-vous pourtant si nous sommes  
 L'horreur du demeurant des hommes,  
 Et que César, ayant dompté  
 Tout le monde, soit redouté,  
 Que soyons sûrs de notre vie?  
 Pensez-vous point que quelque envie  
 Ne se couve secrètement  
 Après l'heureux avancement  
 De ses désirs? (*César*, 597-605)

These questions must be aimed at the audience; no other character is present on the stage. The chorus offers a conclusion to their reflections and warns them:

Ainsi mit-elle (Fortune) la puissance  
 Des premiers Rois hors d'espérance  
 De jamais remettre la main  
 Sur le col du peuple Romain. (*César*, 610-14)

The warning refers to the first kings, the Tarquins, who tried to rule over the Romans. The allusion, like questions and apostrophes, expands dramatic vision and creates a resonance of examples.

### **Interpretive Voice and Allusiveness**

Garnier adopts similar strategies (questions, apostrophe, allusion) to interrupt the action and engage the audience. Garnier adapts all his tragedies, except *Les Juifves*, from Roman and Greek sources. Antiquity provides a rich source of material for allusions. Adapting a classical subject to a tragedy heightens the audience's awareness of allusions. Allusiveness – containing allusions; having reference to something implied or inferred – gains credit toward capturing the audience's goodwill (*captatio benevolentia*). A reader recognizes the allusion and it flatters and pleases them. These classical tropes and figures speak to the audience's classical education and promote a shared culture. Allusion, however, is more complex than simple analogy; it links the tragedy's

plot, the classical allusion, and the contemporary reference, forcing a deeper reflection on the performance. These allusions, both Roman and Greek, work similarly to biblical ones, providing a ready-made toolbox of symbolism. Allusiveness often causes modern readers to stumble through texts, yet understanding these allusions helps identify some of the reasons a sixteenth-century audience would enjoy such a slow-moving and action-interrupted performance.

The chorus in Garnier's *Cornélie* (1574) further develops the allusion to the Tarquin kings, already seen in *César*, and the relation of these tyrants to France. The chorus's discourse breaks the stage-illusion by constantly interrupting the action with questions, the first a rhetorical question: "Ne voit-on pas comme..."<sup>124</sup> They ask, can you not see how a trickle of water becomes a raging river? The chorus suggests analogy comparison: "Comme nostre ville maistresse."<sup>125</sup> The next stanza extends the allusion to Rome and the Tarquins. In this lengthy digression, they explain that fratricide has bloodied the walls and another Tarquin will take over. The penultimate stanza employs the three-fold analogy Cornélie/Lucretia/France (plot/classical allusion/contemporary reference) and warns that she will be avenged:

Encor d'une chaste Lucrece  
L'honneur conjugal outragé  
Sera par sa main vengeresse  
Dessus son propre sang vengé :  
Dedaignant son ame pudique  
Supporter le séjour d'un corps,  
Qu'aura l'audace tyrannique  
Souillé d'impudiques efforts.  
Mais ainsi que la Tyrannie  
Vaincra nos coeurs abastardis,  
Advienne qu'elle soit punie  
Aussi bien qu'elle fut jadis :  
Et qu'un Brute puisse renaître  
Courageusement excité,  
Qu des insolences d'un maistre  
Redelivre nostre Cité. (*Cornélie*, 607-22)

---

<sup>124</sup> Garnier, *Cornélie*, 583.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 591.

The chorus next alludes to Troy and summarizes the story of Cassandra, further adding to the complex sequence of allusions. The soldiers making up the chorus discuss the ruins of Troy: the towers, palaces, mighty walls are all in rubble. They warn Rome the same fate awaits their powerful city. The warning calls up images of Rome's ruins, a common *topos* made most famous by Du Bellay's *Antiquités de Rome*. The imagery implies the question: how did Rome become a field of rubble? This implication inspires a deeper reflection on the stage performance, further forcing the audience to join the chorus in their interpretive space between the stage-illusion and off-stage reality because of their constant interruptions with questions, commentary, and allusions.

The chorus in *Cornélie* retreats from this specific example and again interrupts the action. They pronounce a fateful prediction:

Et je crains qu'un même soleil  
Ne l'ait vue un malheur prédire  
Et qu'il ne voie cet empire  
Cruellement ensanglanté  
Sous l'ombre d'une liberté. (*Cornélie*, 870-74)

It is easy to imagine the chorus turning and facing the crowd to give greater dramatic effect. Regicide only gives the appearance of liberty, and only causes further bloodshed. Regicide leads to civil war, and internecine war fells empires. The first scene of the next act announces the death of Caesar and the consequences of his assassination. This action concludes, and more importantly, answers the long series of questions about kingship and allusions to tyranny.

*Porcie*, Garnier's first published tragedy (1568), offers a transparent effort to connect with the audience. Similar to Des Masures's tragedies, these choruses hold significant roles in the tragedy; Garnier gives them several hundred lines through the course of the play. The tragedy contains three choruses: a generic chorus used for interlude, one composed of soldiers, and a

character-chorus of young Roman women. The tragedy attributes to the interlude chorus qualities of a Fury, a deity who avenges crime. Garnier makes this connection by opening the tragedy with a character named Fury, and then succeeding this character with the chorus, replacing the supernatural with the real. This strategy captures the audience's attention and focuses it on contemporary events instead of the on-stage story.

Sometimes the chorus possesses prophetic “fureur.” D'Aigaliers analyzes this role in Garnier's tragedy, explaining, “La furie que c'est pour monstrier que les malheurs qui doibvent advenir aux joueurs, leur adviennent justement (comme elle declare) et les raisons pourquoy, comme a faict Garnier en ses Tragedies.”<sup>126</sup> The chorus will pass righteous judgment on the characters and events. They will not be distant and impartial; however, the chorus breaks dramatic illusion by using the pronouns “we” and “us” to build rapport with the audience. For example, they say, “Nostre Rome qui s'eslevoit” instead of “Rome qui s'eslevoit.”<sup>127</sup> Rome is a clear allusion to Paris. The lengthy choral interlude in the following act offers a profusion of allusions that causes extreme difficulty to follow as each reference pulls the audience further from the plot. The chorus describes the current situation of civil war, like two lions that tear each other apart. An apostrophe to *Paix* asks her to return “Aux ames citoyennes / Les douceurs anciennes.” The request to Peace resembles the *cantiques* and prayers in biblical tragedies when those chorus members seek God's pardon (the Lord of Peace) on behalf of the people – the audience.<sup>128</sup> This interlude divides the action sequence of this act to employ gratuitous classical allusions and apostrophes for weakly related events and characters, and in consequence, disconnects the audience from the scene. This disconnection creates intellectual complexity, but the price is poor plot progression and a disjointed performance. Garnier continues to streamline

<sup>126</sup> D'Aigaliers, *op. cit.*, Livre V ch. iv.

<sup>127</sup> Garnier, *Porcie*, 191.

<sup>128</sup> See Judges 6:24, Isaiah 9:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and Hebrews 13:20 for God as “Lord of Peace.”

the chorus in his later tragedies, leading to better plot progression and character development, qualities that often earn Garnier literary praise as the most distinguished sixteenth-century French tragedian.

Similar to Garnier's choruses, the chorus in Robelin's *Thébaïde* (1584) employs classical allusions and first person plural pronouns to expand the dramatic illusion and include the audience in the performance. One choral interlude recounts the story of the rape of Europa. Interestingly, the chorus members switch to the first person plural, singing:

Nous n'avions encor' origine,  
Que déjà les glaives tranchants  
Allaient cliquetant en nos champs  
Par une discorde mutine.

This is the beginning of trouble in the region around Thebes; it will climax with the civil war between Oedipus' sons. Thebes, like in France, faces a situation where brothers are again at war. The chorus apostrophizes heaven and asks why the region merits such a punishment:

Pourquoi, (O Jupin) punissant  
De nos Princes le maléfice  
Vas-tu transférant le supplice  
Sur nous, populaire innocent? (*Thébaïde*, 1111-14)

The first person plural combined with interrogative structures link the chorus to the innocent people, who are paying for the crimes of others. They call on Oedipus' family to leave:

"Foudroie les coupables chefs, / Mais loin, loin de notre innocence! / Thèbes qui n'a part à l'offense / Ne doit avoir part aux méchefs." This quote threatens the royal family, the Valois, or perhaps the Guise (often seen as foreign invaders), while Jocaste would make a good Catherine de Medici.

It is enlightening to know that Jean Robelin, author of *La Thébaïde*, was an inhabitant of Lorraine, and staged the tragedy in this region during the civil war troubles. Lorraine was

technically not a territory of France and was a sovereign state. However, it constituted the link between the Guise, who were from Lorraine, and the Valois monarchs. The year of publication, 1584, Francois d'Anjou died. Henry III had no children and a battle erupted between Guise and Henry of Navarre for the throne. On December 31, 1584 the Guise and their allies signed a treaty to form the Sainte-Ligue. The people of Lorraine certainly felt the tensions as much as anywhere in France or Europe.

Similar to comprehending Robelin's use of the chorus, understanding how the playwright manipulates the stage-illusion and communicates with the audience via the chorus also gives insights into La Taille's *Saül le Furieux* (1572). The second act closes with Saul's decision to seek a sorceress. The chorus asks why God delivered them from the Egyptians, saved them in the desert, and helped them triumph over the uncircumcised, only to let them be defeated. Their next lines break the dramatic illusion and make an extensive allusion to contemporary France.

Mais nostre punition  
 En un autre temps differe,  
 Car la grand' subjection  
 Nous donne assez de misere,  
 Estant subjects d'un fol Prince  
 Qui regit mal sa Province  
 Israël donc est lassé  
 Que maudit soit l'inventeur  
 De la Magie premiere,  
 Et qui premier Enchanteur  
 Trouva premier la maniere  
 D'ouvrir les portes aux choses  
 Que le Seigneur tenoit closes. (*Saül le Furieux*, 499-511)

A contemporary would have no difficulty recognizing the references. The "fol Prince" would be Charles IX, while overtly referring to Catherine de Medici and her well known relationship with Nostradamus and astrology. They warn the king to resist the temptation to consult magicians: "Garde, O Roy, qu'il ne te nuise / De parfaire ton emprise." The chorus repeatedly condemns



sorcerers with “Maudicts soient” and “soit maudicte.” The chorus attends the scene with the Pythonesse, the female necromancer whom Saul asks to call Samuel’s ghost, and takes part in the dialogue throughout the third act. The Pythonesse is a common title for the female oracle at the temple of Delphi in Ancient Greece, so her appearance in this biblical tragedy is striking. The Chorus comments upon the scene and announces moral outrage and judgment, translating how the audience should feel in response to the scene. They also describe the character’s gestures and body language, supporting the conclusion that this commentary takes the place of written stage directions. The scene would be so shocking, La Taille makes the Pythonesse exit the stage to conduct her séance.

In *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, La Taille has the chorus directly address the audience instead of posing questions to frame the example of Saul:

Voyez la race Saüline,  
 Qui las, a part à la ruine,  
 Et chatiment de leur ayeul,  
 Qui tant de maux fut coupable,  
 Que mesmes il n’est pas capable  
 D’en supporter la peine seul. (*La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 819-24)

La Taille’s *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, published after the Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre, wavers little about the question of regicide, unlike the tragedies by Grévin and Garnier. The Act IV chorus contrasts Saul to the people and declares it necessary that Saul’s family is destroyed. They directly address the audience:

Mais vous innocentes victimes,  
 Qui payez des paternels crimes,  
 Le pitoyable chastiment,  
 Et pour sauver vostre patrie,  
 Allez si magnanimement,  
 Comme aigneaux à la boucherie.

The tone is confident and the passage is a strange mixture of cruelty and compassion. La Taille's first play about Saul showed much compassion for the unfortunate king. The second tragedy, however, emphasizes the innocent sheep – the audience – who suffer needlessly. Protestants would have dominated the audience for La Taille's second tragedy, and it would be critical for the tragedy's success that the chorus mirror the voice of these people. This reveals another intriguing phenomenon in these tragedies: Protestant playwrights composed the majority of tragedies during the first half of the Wars of Religion (1562-1598) until the 1570s, when Garnier, a Catholic, published several successful tragedies.

### **Music, Song, and Psalms**

Since these Protestant tragedies were filled with choral interludes – with music and song – it suggests a connection to Protestantism's interest in hymn and psalm singing, music they performed outside the Church, much like other stage performances such as tragedy. During the war, even preceding it, the Huguenots became distinguished by their songs. Protestant chants and hymns during riots or before battle adopted the tone and language of psalms. Music and songs were a common vehicle for propaganda during the civil and religious wars.<sup>129</sup> The psalm historian Orentin Douen concludes, “Au moment où éclata cette légitime résistance, la marseillaise huguenote venait d'apparaître...”<sup>130</sup> For example, soldiers for the Reformer cause often sang Psalm 126 (brief, six-verse psalm about restoration) on the field of battle, uniting religion, song, and warfare. Many famous Protestant leaders – Agrippa d'Aubigné, Henri de Navarre, Coligny, Robert Estienne – encouraged themselves and others with psalms. Calvin

---

<sup>129</sup> See Lebègue, *Études sur le théâtre français*, pp. 195-200.

<sup>130</sup> Douen, *Clément Marot et le Psautier Huguenot*, p. 10.

often cast himself in the role of King David the psalmist.<sup>131</sup> He recognized the critical importance of music and its relationship to worship and education for the community of believers.<sup>132</sup>

Huguenots looked to the Psalm book, or Psalter, where music and language worked together to form a Reformation Christian identity. The psalms contributed to a self-identity as refugees from Egypt (France) on their way to the Promised Land, giving them the status of true believers, with a direct link to God, and without the need for an intermediary priest. Aymon de la Voye sang Psalm 124 “When Israel out of Egypt Went” when he was burned for heresy in 1542. Douen explains, “Les Martyrs chantaient d’un cœur héroïque jusqu’au milieu des flammes, et, au spectacle de ces hommes et de ces femmes qui mouraient par conscience quand ils pouvaient d’un mot sauver leur vie.”<sup>133</sup> In his *Histoire des Martyres* (1554), Jean Crespin portrayed the deaths of these men and women and called on readers to imitate their examples. Huguenots also employed psalms to identify one another and to find refuge from persecution in hostile territory. Psalm singing, therefore, distinguished the Huguenots from their Catholic neighbors and gave them a rallying cry.

Psalm singing initially became associated as a sign of protest because Reformers often sang while marching through the streets, protesting the Catholic Church’s theological domination. It was not the psalms and singing itself, but the “when” and “how” Reformers sang them that made the action coercive and threatening. It signaled their religious independence and united them as a spiritual community in protest of sanctioned forms of worship like the Catholic Mass. Psalm singing had a long tradition of inclusion in the Mass, but singing in the vernacular

---

<sup>131</sup> See *Calvin’s Theology of the Psalms* by Herman Selderhuis for a good study of Calvin as David.

<sup>132</sup> Bénédicte Louvat, “Le Théâtre Protestant et la musique (1550-1586)” in *Par la vue et par l’ouïe : Littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance*.

<sup>133</sup> Douen, *Psautier Huguenot*, p. 3.

outside the purview of sanctioned space made Protestant psalm singing inherently subversive. For example, the Peace of Amboise (1563) restricted Protestant worship to a suburb outside certain cities or to the private homes of nobles. This sign of public protest betrayed the appearance and conditions of a religious riot. Defined by Natalie Zemon Davis, this is, “any violent action, with words or weapons, undertaken against religious targets by people who were not acting *officially and formally* as agents of political and ecclesiastical authority.”<sup>134</sup> Psalm singing, especially as a public form of community worship, was forbidden by political and religious authorities, for it encouraged religious liberty and was led by lay people – illegitimate authorities. Douen concludes, “Dès 1531, chanter des psaumes, c’était être hérétique.”<sup>135</sup> Even as early as the fifteenth century, the Bishop Godeau recorded:

Savoir les psaumes par cœur est, parmi les protestants, comme une marque de leur communion ; et, à nostre grande honte, aux villes où ils sont en plus grand nombre, on les entend retentir dans la bouche des artisans et, à la campagne, dans celle des laboureurs, tandis que les catholiques, ou sont muets, ou chantent des chansons deshonnestes. (Douen, *Psautier Huguenot*, p. 1-2)

Reformers emphasized the return to Christian scriptures and the obvious source of lyrics for their music was the book of Psalms. Marot had begun translating the 150 psalms as early as 1531. By 1544, forty-nine psalms were published in Lyon by Etienne Dolet and entitled: *les Psalmes du royal prophete David traductz par Cl. Marot*. Although later editions began to appear with music, the first editions of Marot’s psalms were published *a cappella*, but Reformers quickly recognized the lyrical quality of the translations and began to sing them before there was published music to guide them.

Translating the Psalter into French caused much controversy in the sixteenth century, and Marot and his psalms attracted immense scrutiny. The controversy centered more on translating

---

<sup>134</sup> Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. p. 153.

<sup>135</sup> Douen, *Psautier Huguenot*, p. 1.

the psalms into a vernacular (French), than on publishing and disseminating the psalms. The *Contre poison des chansons de Clement Marot* (1560), a polemical work by Artus Desiré, related the problem:

Comme vous rebelles et inobediens, qui auez laissé la tradition et lordre diuin de tous voz peres anciens, et converty la saincte et sacree escripture en venin et poison, iusques à contemner et mespriser tous chantz ecclesiastiques composez de la grace du S. esprit. lesquelz auez reiectez et delaissez par vn orgueil et presumption, qui vous faict entendre que les Chansons de Clement Marot sont de trop plus grande efficace et verité que lesdictz chantz armonieux de toute l'eglise chrestienne, lesquelz sont chantez et celebrez de si long temps qu'il n'est memoire du contraire. O pauvres citoyens aueuglez, ie vous supplie pensez un petit, et regardez en vous mesmes, comme le Diable vous à grandement deceuz et abusez, d'auoir laissé l'ancienne coustume de chanter Psalmes, Hymnes et Cantiques en l'eglise, pour chanter lesdictes chansons d'un profuge et banny Hereticque faulsement intitulees par luy Psalmes de Dauid...Car toute personne qui meurt hors la foy de l'eglise indubitablement est damné comme vostre chancre Marot. (*Le contre poison des cinquante deux chansons de Clement Marot*, pp. 75-6.)

Marot's faith was questioned and he was accused repeatedly of Lutheranism. The psalms affirmed the connection.<sup>136</sup> In 1535, Marot dedicated an incomplete edition of psalms to Francis I, whom he called on to imitate King David, to whom tradition attributed many psalms. Francis I and later Henry II approved and enjoyed the psalms, but the Sorbonne and many town synods consistently banned the translations, sometimes threatening the death penalty. De Bèze, Calvin's successor in Geneva, was given permission to translate the psalms by Charles IX and his mother Catherine de Medicis in 1561, after the Colloque de Poissy, but the endorsement was soon withdrawn because of this controversy.<sup>137</sup> De Bèze continued nevertheless and the Geneva edition of all 150 psalms (49 by Marot, and 101 by De Bèze) appeared in 1562, the same year as the First War of Religion.

<sup>136</sup> See Screech's work: *Clément Marot: A Renaissance Poet discovers the Gospel*.

<sup>137</sup> See "Théodore de Bèze. Psalms mis en vers français (1551–1562)," p. 199.

Censorship and punishment were ineffective and the Catholic Church found itself in a difficult position. The Church noted psalm singing inspired passion and perhaps apostasy.

Chanson X of the *Contre poison* by Desiré recorded the complexity of the issue, saying:

En chantant ceste chanson nous faisons prière et oraison à Dieu que les pervers nuisans à sadicte Eglise Romaine, lesquels par fraude et dol decoipuent et trompent les vrayes fidèles et catholicques, dont ladicte chanson est fort propre et convenable pour le temps qui court. (*Contre poison*, pp. 19-20)

Perceiving the trend, the Catholic Church discussed a new strategy: their own translations of hymns, psalms, and the scriptures. The Catholic Church sanctioned a revision of the Bible in French after the 1570's, also publishing Bibles with orthodox commentary. By 1589, one would see documents such as *Prières à l'imitation des Pseaumes de David pour l'Eglise Catholique apostolique et Romaine, assaillie par les hérétiques en ce pauvre et desdésé Royaume de France. Avec une prière pour l'armée catholique* (1589).<sup>138</sup> In addition to these translations into the vernacular, the Counter-Reformation trend affected sixteenth-century tragedy. After 1580, Catholic playwrights composed the majority of tragedies in France, including an emphasis on the role of the chorus similar to the preceding Protestant biblical tragedies.

### **Protestant Biblical Tragedies**

Given the history of the psalms and their initial relation to Protestantism, it is unsurprising the first tragedies by Protestants were mostly biblical tragedies with an increased amount of choral interludes. The lack of Catholic response in biblical tragedies is striking since in periods preceding the Reformation it was common to see Mystery and Morality plays based on lives of the saints or on biblical subjects. Few of these doctrinal plays appeared from 1550 to 1650.<sup>139</sup> This phenomenon suggests theater was a site of protest during the civil and religious wars. Only

<sup>138</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de France, B- 15963.

<sup>139</sup> Street, *French Sacred Drama*, p. 39.

one Catholic propaganda play appeared in France before the formation of the Catholic Ligue, the *Colligny* (1575) by Chantelouve. After the formation of the Ligue, many biblical propaganda plays by Catholic authors appeared, imitating the model of Protestant biblical theater.<sup>140</sup>

The choruses in Protestant biblical tragedies imitate the psalms. Two tragedies by Protestant authors, the *David fugitif* (1562) by Louis Des Masures, and the *Adonias* (1586) by Philone – a rare Protestant tragedy after 1580 – uncover a connection between psalm singing, tragedy, and contemporary events. In *David fugitif*, the protagonist David recites the entire Psalm 140.<sup>141</sup> In this psalm, David seeks protection from proud men and slanderers who persecute him. He needs rescue because, “They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent’s; the poison of vipers is on their lips.” (Ps. 140:3) The play’s liminary material establishes David and his rebellious followers as persecuted Reformers, among who are Des Masures and his audience.<sup>142</sup>

The communal spirit inspired by choral singing gives tragedy a powerful voice. In the fifth act of Philone’s *Adonias*, the chorus sings psalm 72 in alternating couplets. The psalm was composed for Solomon’s coronation ceremony and describes the ideal king, one who bases his rule on righteousness and justice. The tragedy takes up this period surrounding Solomon’s rise to the throne and stages Adonias’s rebellion against his brother and divinely anointed king, Solomon. Considering the historical context and the author’s tone as Protestant polemic, it is easy to identify Adonias as the Catholic Duke of Guise and Solomon as the Protestant Henry of

<sup>140</sup> See Street, *French Sacred Drama*, pp. 56-59.

<sup>141</sup> Louis Des Masures, *David fugitif*, 1509-68. The play is not divided into acts, which makes it difficult to understand the purpose of the psalm in this location, about two-thirds into the play.

<sup>142</sup> In the *Epître au Seigneur Philippe Le Brun*, Des Masures explained he wrote, “pour le réconfort et l’édification de ses frères et sœurs en Christ.” This message indicates that his fellow Protestant exiles composed the majority of the audience and should recognize their plight in that of David. Both he and Philippe Le Brun, a Protestant noble and friend, had personally experienced hardships caused by the civil and religious troubles, and he proposed an explicit comparison between their situation and the biblical stories. Des Masures explained, “Cette faveur de Dieu promise à notre foi, / avons nous éprouvée en maint lieu toi et moi, / Dont tu verras les traits aux histoires presentes.” (79-81)

Navarre, the two leading contenders for the French throne.<sup>143</sup> These two performances (*David fugitif* and *Adonias*) therefore, were a direct act of revolt against royal and religious authority, and coerced the public to imitate these subversive actions by alluding to the audience as persecuted brothers and sisters.

The coercive potential of theater had been recognized much earlier than the civil and religious wars in late sixteenth-century France. French kings as early as Louis XII (1498-1515) understood the power of the stage. Louis XII enjoyed the theater and wisely used it to his advantage as political propaganda. Pierre Gringore, his celebrated court poet, composed many pieces – spectacles, plays, and poems – to support the king and the French cause in Italy at the expense of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy.<sup>144</sup> Louis' successors, however, including Francis I (1515-1547), began a policy of repressing theater performances. Town synods in Angers, Paris, and Geneva adopted policies to inhibit theatrical performances because plays targeted certain “gens de bien,” and the stage gave a platform for subversive voices. French theater scholar, Charles Mazouer, observed, “Il n’était plus question de laisser s’exprimer l’opinion publique par le moyen du théâtre ; et les troubles religieux de la seconde moitié du siècle encouragèrent le pouvoir royal à surveiller de très près le théâtre.”<sup>145</sup> The ambiguous relationship with the psalms paralleled the alternating enjoyment and interdiction of theater in sixteenth-century France.

The royal court was not alone in perceiving the threat of theater; religious authorities adopted similar policies of repression and censorship. Protestant leadership initially encouraged

---

<sup>143</sup> *Adonias* carries the subtitle: “Vray miroir, ou tableau, et patron de l’état des choses présentes, et que nous pourrons voir bientôt ci-après qui servira comme de mémoire pour notre temps, ou plutôt de leçon et exhortation à bien espérer. car le bras du Seigneur n’est point accourci.”

<sup>144</sup> See Cynthia Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France*. The most successful works include the *Jeu du Prince des Sots* (1512), *L’Espoir de paix* (1510), and the *Blason des hérétiques* (1524). Gringore’s propaganda techniques will later be recycled by both Protestant and Catholic writers.

<sup>145</sup> Mazouer, *Théâtre français de la Renaissance*, p. 30.



the stage during the tumultuous beginnings of civil conflict in France, but soon turned strongly against theater's image of disorder. In Geneva, Calvin was more favorable to it than most Reformers, but even he only gave weak support for drama. Leaders of the Geneva republic denounced all stage performances for the same reasons as the Catholic leadership. In his study on theater and religious politics, Lebègue concludes, "Si les Protestants sont persécutés par le pouvoir, leur théâtre reste clandestin."<sup>146</sup> Theater was prohibited by various town synods in Reformer territories: Poitiers in 1560, Nîmes in 1572, Figeac, 1579, and Montpellier in 1598.<sup>147</sup> Intriguingly, publications of Protestant biblical theater almost ceased after 1572, which correlates with the rising pressure against these performances as well as with the decimation of the Huguenot population in France. J.S. Street notes only three new French biblical plays written by Protestants after 1572, and all three most likely were composed and published outside France.<sup>148</sup>

The dissemination of unofficial theology through reading and popular social practices – singing and theatrical performance – proved to be a strong threat to Catholic hegemony and cultural unity. Zemon Davis concludes, "Oral culture and popular social organization were strong enough to resist mere correction and standardization from above. Protestantism and certain features of humanism converged with printing to challenge traditional hierarchical values and to delay the establishment of rigid new ones."<sup>149</sup> The outward display of singing by Protestants as propaganda, opposed to the sanctioned use of psalms in Catholic liturgy, proved especially troublesome and abrasive. The songs, hymns, and psalms contained an inherent exhortation to act or resist. The resistance to Catholic doctrine and worship threatened national unity; Catholicism was inseparable from the political union of the land, a union reflected in the

---

<sup>146</sup> See Lebègue, *Études*, pp. 196-97.

<sup>147</sup> See Mazouer, *Théâtre français*, p. 161.

<sup>148</sup> Street, *French Sacred Drama*, p. 53.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

French rallying cry: *Une foi, une loi, un roi*. Public singing became a site of serious contention and led to numerous violent confrontations. Both sides used noise, bells, and psalm singing to drown out their adversaries' songs or prayers.<sup>150</sup> These threatening actions increased violence and calls for war.

Psalm singing played a crucial role in the event that ignited widespread conflict. On 1 March 1562, about 500 Calvinists were worshipping in a large barn near the town of Vassy. Meanwhile, members of the powerful Guise family were traveling through the area and decided to stop at Vassy to hear mass at the local parish church. What happened next remains uncertain, but the Guise entourage overheard psalm singing in the barn, the rival Protestants and Catholics exchanged insults, a rock struck the Duke of Guise, and the armed Guise followers mounted an assault on the barn. Thirty worshippers inside the barn were killed and another 100 were wounded in what is traditionally referred to as the Massacre of Vassy. This event caused Protestant nobles to set out on the path of open warfare in defense of religious liberty and political independence, launching the first of what would be at least eight separate Wars of Religion in France.<sup>151</sup>

Musical notations appended to plays indicate choruses sang their lines.<sup>152</sup> Protestant tragedians Joachim De Coignac and Louis Des Masures included the musical notations for the chorus. Furthermore, in his *Art poétique françois* (1597), d'Aigaliers explained, "Les chœurs selon Viperan au lieu susdict doivent estre chantez en musique."<sup>153</sup> And in Robert Garnier's

---

<sup>150</sup> Lebègue, *Études*, p. 171.

<sup>151</sup> Douen explains, "Le fanatisme s'irritait des lenteurs des tribunaux qui tardaient trop à supprimer les chanteurs de psaumes, devenus de jour en jour plus nombreux, malgré des supplices sans cesse renouvelés ; aussi, quand on vit suivant l'expression du jésuite Maimbourg, l'hérésie triomphante entrer dans le palais des rois (1561), l'immense armée des prêtres et des moines ne garda plus de mesure ; elle échauffa la populace qui vivait des aumônes des couvents, prêcha le meurtre et le massacre en grand. De là les tueries de Vassy, Sancerre, Bourges etc." *Psautier Huguenot*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>152</sup> See Lebègue, *Études*, p. 171.

<sup>153</sup> Pierre de Laudun d'Aigaliers, *Art poétique françois*, Livre V, ch. vii.

*Porcie* (1568), the Nourrice exhorts the chorus of girls, “Chantons d’une vois.”<sup>154</sup> In another chorus in the same play, the girls encourage each other to sing and dance. In the *Desconfiture de Goliath* (1550) by De Coignac, a soldier calls on spectators, “Chantans en Pseaumes & cantiques, / En langue de tous entendu.” Due to the increased emphasis on reading Scripture, sixteenth-century authors would be familiar with the psalms, many of which advised believers to confirm faith with music. Psalm 98 exhorts, “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! / Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody!” (Ps. 98: 4-5).<sup>155</sup>

Renaissance tragedians included music to convey a spirit of community and a resonance stronger than spoken dialogue. A prefatory sonnet to *La Thébàide* (1584) confirms the power of music:

Quand la lyre a fini ses chants saintement doux  
A l’un l’arc en la main, et à l’autre la lance?  
Non, non, le Dieu des arts et celui des combats,  
A présent compagnons, s’entrelacent les bras.

These verses from the tragedy link musical instruments to the instruments of warfare, emphasizing the connection between song and battle. It is well-known that the lyre was a common instrument in Ancient Greece, but the author of the *Thébàide*, Jean Robelin, would also understand the harp, similar to a lyre (and often used interchangeably in poetry), was the preferred instrument of the famous psalmist, David, who was a poet, musician, and warrior. Linking the chorus’s songs to battle indicates the threatening nature of tragedy, one that inspires action. By this link, the *Thébàide* also confirms the connection between music, tragedy, and contemporary events. The play stages the civil war in Ancient Thebes, sparked by Oedipus’ abdication of the throne, and his sons’ unwillingness to concede to the other. The ancient tale of

---

<sup>154</sup> Garnier, *Porcie*, 1945-48.

<sup>155</sup> Psalm 150:3-5 contains a similar exhortation.

two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, locked in a suicidal duel to gain the throne, echoes the fratricide in contemporary France.

Choral interludes fulfill similar purposes in Louis Des Masures' trilogy, the *Tragédies saintes* (1562). In addition to psalms, Des Masures integrates a significant number of *cantiques* (hymns of praise), into various parts of his tragedies.<sup>156</sup> The *cantique* is a simple song unaccompanied by music, distinguishing it from a psalm that is sung with musical accompaniment. The song paraphrases biblical text, and the *cantique* is seen as an integral part of Protestant liturgy. These *cantiques* confirm the importance of singing and give a strong lyrical quality to early Protestant tragedies like the *Tragédies saintes*.<sup>157</sup> Not only the chorus, but also the principal characters direct the communal singing of songs. David leads many of these choral interludes, and since the book of Psalms is traditionally attributed to David, this music projects a powerful and deep polemical significance in the plays.

A *cantique* appears only 190 lines into the first of Des Masures's three tragedies, *David combattant*, and immediately reveals an effort to coerce characters and the public to act. The choral episode resembles many psalms; it is an exaltation of God's omnipotence and justice. David commands them: "Sus, Israël, lève-toi, / Espère en ton Dieu, ton roi." The imperative mood actively engages spectators to take part in the drama, both on and off stage. The chorus again employs the imperative in the second tragedy, *David triomphant* (1562), to encourage one another, "faisons de danse un tour/ Et d'une voix qui résonne à l'entour/ Chantons un beau cantique."<sup>158</sup> In this case, the imperative in the first-person plural (chantons, faisons) exhorts the audience and adopts them into the chorus, or makes the chorus one of the people. They attempt

---

<sup>156</sup> In the first tragedy, *David combattant*, cantiques and choruses compose 400 of the 1858 lines, about 22% of the play.

<sup>157</sup> Louvat, *Théâtre Protestant*, p. 148.

<sup>158</sup> Des Masures, *David triomphant*, 460-64.

to awaken the audience from their passive slumber, “Réveillez-vous, réveillez, / Réveillez-vous tous.”<sup>159</sup> The musical notations published with the text indicate the chorus would sing and dance while performing these lines. The music, singing, and dancing, combined with these imperatives, influenced spectators to join in the stage activities – David’s slaying of Goliath (Protestant defeat of the Catholic Church). After this victory, David and his followers rebelled against the anointed, but divinely abandoned king, Saul.

In *David triomphant* the chorus will be responsible for the most critical lines of the story; one of their songs will lead to the civil war between Saul and David’s supporters. They rejoice:

Chantez, filles de la ville.  
Saül en a tué mille  
Et David, homme plus fort,  
En a mis dix mille à mort. (*David triomphant*, 1586-89)

This singing inspires Saul’s jealousy and his subsequent persecution of David. Des Masures reveals the significance of this scene by making the chorus repeat these lines several times. The modern edition by Balmas suppresses this repetition, yet the editors note, “Nous souhaitons toutefois que le lecteur soit conscient du caractère obsédant de cette louange qui va provoquer la jalousie de Saül et lui faire éprouver de la haine pour David. Ce refrain (et les sentiments populaires qu’il exprime) est le ressort principal qui promeut tout le reste de la trilogie.”<sup>160</sup> Saul fears the chorus’s song because it shows David’s popular approval and enhances David’s power, while undermining his own authority. Saul understands the chorus directly threatens the foundation of his power – the people – and now he must destroy the threat and put David to death. Saul vows, “Je le mettrai à mort... / Puis qu’on vienne chanter, qu’on vienne faire fête / De ses faits glorieux, de sa brave conquête!”<sup>161</sup> The song carries a powerful message that subverts

---

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 1258-59.

<sup>160</sup> Balmas and Dassonville, *La tragédie*, Vol. 2, p. 354.

<sup>161</sup> Des Masures, *David triomphant*, 1633-36.

the established authority – Saul’s kingship. In spite of the threat, David sends a definitive message in the final play of the trilogy: “Sans fin nous chanterons...Sans fin ta louange dirons / Soit à mourir ou vivre.”<sup>162</sup> David and his band of exiles, like Des Masures and other Protestants, will continue to sing psalms and hymns, knowing the civil strife this action can influence.

Similar to Des Masures, protestant tragedian Jean de La Taille became embroiled in the civil and religious wars. He served in Condé’s Huguenot army, was wounded, left the military life, and focused on writing. In La Taille’s *Saül le Furieux* (1573), the action centers on Saul’s madness and death.<sup>163</sup> In this tragedy, Levites, the priestly cast in Ancient Israel, make up the chorus and legitimate its authority. In the Bible, God chooses the tribe of Levi (Levites) to lead all worship activities: temple upkeep, offerings, sacrifice, and prayer. Those duties include music, a responsibility emphasized by David the psalmist. The book of Chronicles records, “David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals.”<sup>164</sup> (1 Chronicles 15:16) Saul and David oppose each other for the crown; however, according to Saul’s oldest son Jonathan, the Levites – and the chorus – should remain uninvolved. In the first act, Jonathan commands the chorus to sing and pray for Israel’s triumph, not for one or the other claimants. Similar to the Levites’ difficult position, Jonathan has a dilemma; he has vowed to remain loyal to both his father and friend. In response to Jonathan’s request, the Levites sing:

Puis que nous prions pour tous,  
D’aller en guerre avec vous.  
Nous sommes exempts et quittes,  
Nous dis-je Presbtres Levites. (*Saül le Furieux*, 163-66)

<sup>162</sup> Des Masures, *David fugitif*, 2285-86.

<sup>163</sup> La Taille composed his *Saül le Furieux* in 1562-63, but published the play in 1573.

<sup>164</sup> See also Numbers 10, 1 Chronicles 25, and 2 Chronicles 29.

The stanza unites the chorus with the warriors, with the people, and with the audience. La Taille sprinkles the vowel pair *ou* into all four lines – *nous, pour tous, vous, nous* (we, for all, you all, and we again). The effect creates a sense of unified community: The first person plural, *nous*, in the first line glides into *pour tous*; the *vous* at the end of the second line pairs with the *nous* at the beginning of the third; and the third and fourth lines give a final drumbeat – *nous, nous*. The priests encourage the people to sing psalms because it will help defeat their enemies. “Lors chascun d’un nouveau psalme / Merçira Dieu de ta palme.”<sup>165</sup> In this play, Saul and the Israelites are engaged against the Philistines (an allusion to the French fear of a Spanish attack), but the Philistines destroy them, and David arrives after the defeat. The Levites had aimed to stay neutral, but Saul’s persecution, including the execution of the chief priest, drives them into David’s camp.

La Taille’s *Saül le Furieux*, as well as the final tragedy of Des Masures’ trilogy, *David fugitif*, stage the dangerous consequences for Saul, and the nation, when the king no longer benefits from the calming influence of David’s harp and singing.<sup>166</sup> Saul loses God’s blessing, and an evil spirit torments him. The king has episodes of madness and rage and only David’s music brings relief. Saul grows more and more jealous of David’s fame after he defeats Goliath, and finally, the king, in a fit of madness, hurls his spear at David, who immediately takes flight. Without the music, Saul loses all self-control and becomes a tyrant, legitimating David’s rebellion.

The *David fugitif* by Des Masures highlights Saul’s downfall and loss of grace in contradistinction to David’s rise to the throne. David returns from exile to help ease the king’s suffering, but Saul threatens to cut out David’s tongue: “Je lui ferai la langue qui babille / Vive

<sup>165</sup> Jean de La Taille, *Saül le Furieux*, 213-14.

<sup>166</sup> These tragedies parallel the accounts found in 1 Samuel 16 and 18.

arracher.”<sup>167</sup> In Protestant biblical tragedies, the chorus symbolizes the right to speak publicly, further associating these early tragedies with religious and civil liberty. The tongue is a common metaphor in Christian scripture. It is identified as a dangerous tool, either of destruction or of peace; the tongue can relay the healing word of God, or can unsheathe the sword of wrath.<sup>168</sup> A Proverb warns, “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (Proverbs 12:18) And the Word is “Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit.” (Hebrews 4:12) De Coignac, a Protestant playwright writing before the outbreak of civil and religious war in France, seizes the dual symbolism of the tongue in his tragedy, *Desconfiture de Goliath* (1551).<sup>169</sup> De Coignac casts the tongue to convey truth, and when needed, righteous destructive power:

Ainfi vid-on, un temps fut, Verité  
 Ensevelie en tenebres profondes:  
 Et le tumbeau gardoient beftes immondes,  
 En la façon à elles ufitée.  
 Or à prefent elle est resuscitée,  
 Ayant en main un glaive à deux trenchans. (*Desconfiture de Goliath*)

Terrible beasts, minions of the apostate Catholic Church, have concealed Truth (Word of God – Bible). Now, Truth is resuscitated (through reading of scripture and psalm singing). This Truth wields a weapon, the two-bladed sword (the tongue) that it will use to slay the beast. David has slain Goliath with this weapon and decapitated him, symbolizing the giant’s conceit and impotent strength. According to the tragedy’s dedicatory epistle, the Protestant King of England, Edward, should imitate David’s example and lead the battle against the apostate Catholic Church as well as against the Catholic French monarchy, thereby resuscitating the Truth in Renaissance Europe.

<sup>167</sup> Des Masures, *David fugitif*, 1700-01.

<sup>168</sup> See also Psalm 5:9, 12, 57:4, 64:3, 119:172; Hebrews 4:12; Revelations 1:16, 19:15.

<sup>169</sup> Joachim de Coignac, *La Desconfiture de Goliath*.



In Act I of De Coignac's tragedy, *La Desconfiture de Goliath*, a Hebrew soldier asks if there is a brave young man to defeat "ce blasphémateur difformé." He commands the audience:

Assemblez-vous donques au lieu,  
Où lon fait priere publique,  
Pour ensemble prier à DIEU,  
Qu'il garde nostre Republicque. (*Desconfiture de Goliath*)

Assembling and making a public confession of faith threatened the stability of social order by creating religious divisions and animosity. During much of the civil wars in France, law, under the penalty of death, forbade Protestants to assemble publicly except in specific areas.

The soldier refers to their land as a Republic. This anachronistic vocabulary clarifies the Republic is France and not Ancient Israel, which transitioned to monarchy under King Saul. During this period recorded in First Samuel, the people requested a king, believing it would bring them glory like the surrounding nations. Although France was also a monarchy, it was common to refer to the nation as a Republic, a designation absent from biblical accounts of Saul and David's kingships. The choice of republic assumed the people carried a voice and an amount of power in the nation. This power is seen in the alternating rhyme scheme that pairs "priere publique" with "nostre Republicque," emphasizing the public's role in a Republic (*res publica* meaning the *public thing*). The Republic, according to the soldier, gains strength and glory through informal public worship and prayer led by a layperson and not a priest, an anti-Catholic polemic.

Throughout the tragedy, the chorus connects the play's audience to its plot, intertwining religious strife in both Israel and Europe. The connection expands the dramatic illusion created onstage, and makes the spectators personally devoted to the tragedy's outcome. Will David triumph over Goliath? The chorus communicates with the audience by singing psalms, strengthening the bond between the Ancient Israelites and sixteenth-century Protestants. An

Israelite soldier calls on spectators, “Chantans en Pseaumes & cantiques, / En langue de tous entendu,” because this action helps triumph in battle, building a sense of immediacy for the spectators. The singing inspires *esprit de corps* and a sense of community; furthermore, singing in the language of the general populace contends with the practice of the Church to communicate in Latin. Therefore, the site of contention becomes the control over the ability and right to communicate religious doctrine. The tragedy stages the direct link between the right of communal hymn singing and the success of David’s battle against Goliath. In *Desconfiture de Goliath*, the Church (Goliath) has attempted to smother the Huguenot voice. Without David’s victory over the Philistines:

Nous ne pourrions en l’Eglise  
De Dieu, la Parole ouyr:  
Ny en sa grace promise,  
En l’Ecriture comprise. (*Desconfiture de Goliath*)

This conditional statement involves the key lexicon: Church, hear, Word, grace, Scripture. The symbolism of the tongue magnifies the play’s significance: it is the battle over the right to speak and to hear. David cuts off Goliath’s head and the giant can no longer speak, he can no longer blaspheme, he can no longer impose silence. The head of the giant, now held in the triumphant hand of David, fashions him as the symbolic voice of Christianity and as the divinely sanctified leader of the Reformed Church.

The play’s theme echoed events in France: Catholic soldiers stuffed pages from the Bible into dead Protestant’s mouths or in their wounds; the action mocked the healing word of God, a metaphor commonly used by Protestants to support the personal reading of scripture, public worship, and communal singing. Authorities began to cut out heretics’ tongues before execution so they were unable to sing.<sup>170</sup>

---

<sup>170</sup> See Douen, *Psautier Huguenot*, pp. 4-5.

Biblical metaphor and allusion resonated more strongly than other tropes. All European states relied on Christian symbols (*fidei symbola*) and imagery during the religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They often used representations of Mary such as images of the *Mary victrix* (Mary of Victory), which floated above the battlefield, and shouted the battle cry *Santa Maria!*<sup>171</sup> It is necessary to understand the resonance of this symbolism to understand the strength of the language. In tragedy, psalm singing and biblical tropes and figures transcended literary boundaries and invaded Greek and Roman tragedies, non-biblical subjects, revealing the technique of *contaminatio*, mixing allusions and symbolism from different cultures. Renaissance spectators and readers had no difficulty following the cultural mixing; in fact, they expected this *mélange* and enjoyed its effects, especially at the theater.<sup>172</sup>

In the *Pompey* (1579) by an anonymous playwright, a chorus concludes the tragedy with an apostrophe to the Christian God. The author's marginal note describes their discussion: "Ce chant monstre que l'infidelité des hommes sera punie de Dieu tost, ou tard: et que Dieu veoit tout ce qui se fait en ce monde." Man's unfaithfulness, God's righteous wrath, and the all-seeing God are Christian tropes that poorly apply to the Greco-Roman pantheon. During the sixteenth-century, Ronsard and other humanists gave them an hypostatic existence; they could see the pagan gods as simple fictions without reality. Ronsard explains,<sup>173</sup>

Car Jupiter, Pallas, Apollon sont les noms  
Que le seul DIEU recoit en maintes nations  
Pour ses divers effectz que l'on ne peut comprendre,  
Si par mille surnoms on ne les fait entendre.

Catholic playwrights continued these techniques when they began to dominate theater production in the mid-1570s. In spite of the widespread perception of drama as a threat to social order and

---

<sup>171</sup> Schilling *op. cit.*, pp. 169-71.

<sup>172</sup> For a discussion on *contrafactum* and theater, see Louvat, *Théâtre Protestant*, p. 138.

<sup>173</sup> Cited in Jacquot, Odon, and Bacquet, *Les tragédies de Sénèque et le théâtre de la Renaissance*, p. 92.

religious harmony, the Catholic Church recognized the power that could be harnessed from the stage and permitted Jesuit schools to keep theater as an essential part of their curriculum, the *ratio studiorum*, as long as their performances edified future defenders of the Catholic faith.<sup>174</sup> One theater historian observed, “Plus encore qu’un simple complément à l’enseignement de la littérature, le théâtre scolaire joue dans ce cas un rôle véritablement culturel.”<sup>175</sup> The Jesuits incorporated theater as a critical weapon to fight against heresy during the Counter-Reformation movement. They began to use the tools with which their enemies were succeeding. Drama helped indoctrinate youth with a Church-approved philosophy of history and of Christian morals while sounding a call to action against heretics.

Garnier, a Catholic playwright and monarchist, composed the *Antigone* (1580), an interesting mixture of Greco/Roman and Christian culture. The chorus links the plot – rebellion and civil strife between family members – with events in France. The chorus invokes the Christian God: “Escoute, Père, O bon Denys : / Rassemble les cœurs désunis / Des frères plongez en discords.”<sup>176</sup> When Garnier’s characters invoke God’s or the gods’ mercy, they are addressing the one Christian God, or the Trinity.<sup>177</sup> Garnier clearly Christianizes the pagan gods in the chorus, and their songs often resemble hymns or psalms. For example:

---

<sup>174</sup> The Collège de Messine, founded in 1548, was the prototype for later Jesuit colleges of which the Collège Romain became the model in 1551. The Jesuits opened the celebrated Collège de la Madeleine in 1572 to combat the perceived Protestant dominance of many French schools. Ignatius of Loyola formulated the Jesuit model of studies, the *modus parisiensis*, at the heart of which were the classical authors, similar to the humanist schools. However, the Jesuits innovated with sterner discipline and by incorporating studies of history, geography, and the sciences. The schools however, seemed more like monasteries and convents than academies. “Les jésuites voulaient former des chrétiens et des chrétiens capables de collaborer à l’œuvre de l’Eglise, qui est de racheter le monde et de le mener à Dieu, à commencer par les hérétiques qu’il faut reconquérir pour l’Eglise de Rome.” The Jesuit curriculum had been elaborated over a long period of time but was codified in the *ratio studiorum* by Pierre Nadal and finally published as the *Ratio atque Institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu* in 1599.

<sup>175</sup> Mazouer, *Théâtre français*, p. 156.

<sup>176</sup> Garnier, *Antigone*, p. 125. The Pinvert edition has no line numbers.

<sup>177</sup> See Lebègue in *Tragédies de Sénèque*. Lebègue explains, “Les Dieux de Garnier sont tout-puissants, et tout dépend d’eux; ils sont justes, assistent les faibles, récompensent les vertueux, punissent les méchants après les avoir laissés prospérer; ils châtient les enfants pour les crimes de leurs pères, les pleurs des nations asservies montent jusqu’à eux.” p. 92.

Si nous recevons, O Seigneur,  
 De toy ce désiré bonheur,  
 Tandis que le ciel tournera,  
 Tandis que la mer flotera,  
 Nous chanterons à ton honneur. (*Antigone*, p. 125)

That a Catholic author, Garnier, and one who strictly supported the monarchy, introduces a hymn-like song into a Greek plot reflects the Catholic Church's move to accept scripture reading and psalm singing in French; for example, the Catholic Church published a French translation of the Bible in 1570. The Counter-Reformation is also seen in the mixture of Catholic and Protestant psalm translations during the Wars of Religion. A radical Protestant, DuPlessis-Mornay's *Méditations sur les psaumes* appeared in 1586. Soon afterward, in 1588, the Catholic Blaise de Vigenère published his thoughts on the psalms (*Le Psautier de David*). His dedicatory epistle compares Henry III to David and encourages the king to imitate the psalmist, a reminder of De Coignac's dedication to England's King Edward and the playwright's call on that monarch to take David as an exemplum. In the same year as de Vignère's *Psautier*, Jean de Sponde released a similar study, but this time David is compared to Henry IV, the Protestant turned Catholic French king. Religious and political propaganda were truly versatile in sixteenth-century Europe, no doubt contingent on who currently held power during the seesaw action of the Wars of Religion. The chorus in sixteenth-century French tragedy followed a similar fate; it remained a polemical tool in the hands of both Protestant and Catholic playwrights to facilitate communication between stage and spectator. The communication encourages debate over contemporary problems: kingship, tyranny, religion, etc., while tragedy provides the useful frame for these arguments.

## Framing the Debate

The previous sections of this chapter illustrate the intriguing manner in which the chorus in sixteenth-tragedy can frame political and religious debate. Scholars have observed that humanist tragedians rarely thought to construct scenes that opposed two personalities or characters.<sup>178</sup> Instead, playwrights stage these characters in succession, usually with monologues, or by dialogues with an agreeable interlocutor. Both strategies result in less effective methods to create dramatic tension. French dramaturges certainly noticed confrontational dialogue in Greek tragedy, but fail to profit from the ability of dialogue to advance plot. Since two opposing characters rarely confront each other, the chorus must fill in this lacuna and provide answers for which argument gains force and superiority.

For example, the four choruses in Des Masures's *David combattant* form symmetrical viewpoints; two choruses associate with the Israelites and two with the Philistines. Although the two sides only meet when David battles Goliath, the choral symmetry facilitates discussion and debate between two opposing ideas. The choral troupes serve as a synecdoche and voice of the two opposing forces to relay these viewpoints to the audience.

A slight modification is seen in Des Masures' third tragedy *David fugitif*, where the playwright fashions the role of Satan as an intriguing anti-hero. Satan's role is accompanied by the voice of a chorus of his own followers, and since this story occurs after the Israelites defeat the Philistines, it seems Satan's chorus has only shifted from the Philistines. This chorus exhorts Satan's followers to silence David. He announces his mission immediately following the series of exhortations by the Israelite chorus. He declares that he will "pervertir le sens de la Parole écrite / J'ai et aurai entre eux une race hypocrite / Qui, portant le manteau de religion sainte, /

---

<sup>178</sup> See Charpentier, *op. cit.*, p.24.

Montrera par dehors une sainteté feinte.”<sup>179</sup> The threat of this statement is revealed by the fact that these four verses were suppressed in the 1587 and 1595 editions of the play published by Mamert Patisson in Paris. The omission indicates the reference to the habit of priests or monks, a whitewashed exterior that should be mistrusted.

The tragedy *Pompey* (1579) uses a more intriguing approach; to debate problems, one chorus splits into three groups: Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode. They discuss kingship because Ptolemy, the Egyptian king, is going to betray Pompey. They relate three different stories about kings who betrayed guests and end with Egyptians who persecuted the Israelites. The marginal note comments on this text that, “Dieu punit l’Aegypte pour avoir violé le droit d’hospitalité aux Israelites.” The chorus calls this betrayal, “l’infidélité humaine,” interesting covenant vocabulary. They extend the negative image of Egypt (probably Catholic France) to include a land full of snakes, crocodiles, and evil men. Their ancestor reveals their nature: “Car de Cain prend son estre,” another example of *contaminatio* between biblical and classical culture. The chorus sings together and brings the audience back to the illusion of the stage and story: “Mes amies, voicy vostre triste maistresse ... Elle tient son mari qu’elle ne peut laisser, / Et semble le vouloir doucement caresser.” The chorus breaks the illusion and then reestablishes it. Although the chorus seems to align with the Pompey faction throughout the play, this split aims to offer the chorus as a more objective observer.

Often a character on the stage would claim to be the voice of the people. This becomes problematic when these claims contradict other characters’ confessed sympathy to the populace. The chorus must take responsibility to challenge the audience to understand the differing positions and judge which is right. This conflict helps to show divisiveness in public opinion. The chorus, more than any character, functions critically as the true voice of public opinion. As

---

<sup>179</sup> Des Masures, *David triomphant*, 581-81.

Grimal explains, “Le chœur est le porte-parole de la cité. En un temps où la cité s’est élargie aux dimensions de l’humanité, le chœur devient tout naturellement l’orateur de la condition humaine.”<sup>180</sup> According to Balmas, they “représentent, en réalité, non seulement les vétérans de César, mais le peuple romain dans sa vérité historique.”<sup>181</sup> The chorus also represents an innocent audience, simple voyeurs, to the stage action. This position mirrors the real audiences’ feelings and premonitions.

In the *Thébaïde* by Robelin, the name given to the chorus, les *thébains*, reveals it is the public voice. The chorus is the voice for the symbolic body of citizens, the Thebans. The chorus at the end of Act IV in *Thébaïde* gives more indications that they represent the city’s citizens. They speak about “notre cité” and “nos champs” and “nos tours.” They are the citizens of the city who now claim victory over the invading army and unite in celebration.

Although the chorus claims to be one of the people, this chorus of Thebans betrays their partiality to Jocasta. In sixteenth-century tragedy, a chorus is often a defined group – Roman soldiers, Israelite women, Levites – who will speak and sympathize with only one of the characters or with one group. Many lines in the *Thébaïde* show pity for the unfortunate queen and describe her misery. For example, the chorus refers to and describes, “Notre Jocaste échevelée...S’en va, tant la douleur la presse.”<sup>182</sup> The queen mother is an innocent victim like the other citizens, while her sons’ ambition and pride have led to the civil war. The chorus gains the audience’s goodwill and profits from it to inspire compassion and pity for one character – a common technique of Renaissance dramaturges. Building sympathy for one character adds to the credibility of that character’s position, or the idea they represent. The chorus could also serve the role of confidant for a specific character, and the presence or absence of the chorus during the

<sup>180</sup> Grimal in Jacquot, Oddon, and Bacquet, *Les tragédies de Sénèque et le théâtre de la Renaissance*, p. 5.

<sup>181</sup> Balmas, Introduction, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>182</sup> Robelin, *op. cit.*, 1176-78.



course of the play shows support for certain characters while isolating others. Identifying this character reveals which position, or *idée maîtresse*, the tragedy advances and supports.

Grévin's chorus in his tragedy *César* is more problematic because it seems to remain impartial. The playwright composes his chorus of four soldiers from Caesar's army. They provide a fascinating example of how the chorus can interact with different characters, enlightening the meaning in the play. The chorus in *César* is surprising because they praise Caesar's victories and glory, yet they fear his ambition. They question Caesar's motives and do not understand why he remains disappointed after defeating Pompey. Will he remain benevolent? The chorus's hesitations reflect the audience's conflicts about the action. Have they been convinced by Brutus' argument in the preceding scenes? It would be a mistake to conclude too quickly that the chorus follows Caesar unquestioningly. If they do not agree completely with Caesar, why does Grévin choose to compose the chorus of Caesar's soldiers? He could use a chorus of Romans if he wishes them to be impartial, but the chorus associates with Caesar and the audience. The confusion about whom the chorus supports reflects the disagreement from scholars about which side Grévin supports – Caesar or Brutus?

Nevertheless, perhaps there is a better solution to this problem. The chorus evokes sympathy from the audience by referring to one of the character's misery, but this character is neither Caesar nor Brutus. The descriptions of this character reveal for whom the audience should feel compassion. Calpurnia, Caesar's wife, wins their heart. "Considérant aussi les pleurs / Et la crainte de Calpurnie...La pauvrete crait...Elle s'en va toute fâchée, / Tordant ses bras, la larme à l'oeil." She has lost everything in one day and sits on the precipice of suicide (the audience would be aware of the story's ending). Using dramatic irony, the audience knows that Calpurnia must suicide to remain historically accurate, and Grévin takes advantage of her tragic

fate to cast her as the only character innocent of any wrongdoing. Calpurnia best represents the helpless people, a common *topos* that will be further explored in the next chapter.

Although the chorus laments Calpurnia's suffering, the group forgets her misery and responds quickly to Mark Anthony's stirring speech for revenge. Grévin employs an *enjambement* with the final line of his speech and the first line of the chorus, linking their positions. Immediately after the speech, they command, "Armons-nous sur ce traître! / Armes, armes soldats, mourons pour notre maître!" The rhyme builds an antithesis on traître/maître. Mark Anthony responds to the chorus' reaction to his speech, creating the only interaction between characters and chorus in the play. He addresses the chorus to explain his actions: "Moi, je vais remonter à ce peuple de Rome / Quels malheurs nous promet la perte d'un tel homme, / Si elle n'est vengée ainsi qu'il appartient."<sup>183</sup> The declaration promises a never-ending repetition of violence. The chorus compares the loss of Caesar to a shipwreck, the nation left without its Captain. The chorus's final two lines summarize their lesson: "Cette mort est fatale / Aux nouveaux inventeurs de puissance Royale." The prophetic statement appears ambiguous. Who are the new inventors? Is it Brutus and his fellow conspirators or Mark Anthony and Caesar? The message in the play is unclear and clues support both positions because the chorus responds favorably, first to Caesar, next to Brutus, most compassionately to Calpurnia, and finally, militantly in support of Mark Anthony.

An attachment to female protagonists defines the chorus in a number of tragedies. The tragedy *Porcie* (1568), by Garnier, is less ambiguous than *César*. The Nourrice clarifies the chorus's intentions to support only certain characters:

Chantons d'une voix  
Brute nostre support,  
Brute que nos Rois

---

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 1094-96.

Ont conduit à la mort. (*Porcie*, 1945-48)

Brutus and Porcie are married, the Nourrice is her servant, and the chorus of girls only discourses with that faction. The chorus works to connect this family to the suffering of the city. The tragedy *Pompey* (1579), written by an anonymous playwright, has one chorus “de ses damoiselles Romaines,” attached to Corneille (Cornelia). The play is not divided into acts and scenes, but the chorus accompanies the protagonist, Corneille, instead of serving as an interlude to facilitate scene changes. The tragedy *Adonias* (1586) has two choruses, both of women, one a chorus of Israelite girls, the other *damoiselles* who accompany the queen, Solomon’s mother. The chorus’s association with the queen is critical because this places them in Solomon’s camp. Moreover, in the tragedy of her name, Antigone enters the stage with a *chœur de filles*, who invoke the audience’s sympathy and declare the message: “Vostre innocente mort vivra tousjours célèbre, / Et célèbre le los de vostre piété.”<sup>184</sup> The chorus also observes for the audience that, “Cette pauvre Antigone en sa misère faut / Pour sa condition elle a le cœur trop haut.” In this tragedy, the chorus’s lines are alexandrines, the same versification for other characters, but unlike other choruses in the play. The audience would recognize the change in speech pattern and more inclined to identify with Antigone’s position. This tension caused by a female protagonist and female chorus will be discussed in the next chapter.

The chorus’s role diminished toward the end of the century and became more and more impersonal and generic. Choruses discuss *lieux communs* or include a large amount of *sententiae*. In her study on sixteenth-century humanist tragedy, Charpentier concludes, “...la plus grande partie de la morale tragique se trouve exprimée dans les chœurs.”<sup>185</sup> They function as a part of a lie detector and make the audience aware of the truthfulness of statements. The chorus

---

<sup>184</sup> Garnier, *Antigone*, p. 195.

<sup>185</sup> Charpentier, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

also moralizes, reflecting on the implications of the action. In his *De l'Art de la Tragédie*, La Taille demands for each play to include a chorus and outlines its purpose, saying, “Il fault qu’il y ait un Chœur, c’est à dire, une assemblée d’hommes ou de femmes, qui à la fin de l’acte discourerent sur ce qui aura esté dit devant.” The chorus must listen impartially and then debate what they have heard. These general maxims, proverbs, and lessons saturate Renaissance tragedies and have already been the source of many studies. They add little to the plot and much too sixteenth-century theater’s reputation for long-winded discourse and slow-moving action.

In the next century, seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies abandon the once ubiquitous chorus. Jondorff makes the case that this function appears in the prefaces for later tragedy.<sup>186</sup> It is likely, too, this function is given to the *raisonneur*, a character absent from early modern tragedy. The choric reaction also evolved into poems set in the middle of a seventeenth-century play. The absence of the chorus is most telling for changes and developments in tragedy, especially the move from static monologue or dialogue and flat characters to emphasis on action and psychology. Seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies, on the other hand, neglect this opportunity; playwrights desire less to debate contemporary issues in their tragedies than to refine the art of tragedy and storytelling. However, these tragedies still will often include a character (a *raisonneur*, for example) who comments on the action for the audience instead of advancing the action, a device similar to the choral interlude. This substitution of a character for a chorus reveals the seventeenth-century shift to a focus on character and plot development instead of rhetoric. The absence of a chorus also reveals the downgrading of female protagonists in these civil-war tragedies from tragic hero to secondary character.

This chapter aimed to demonstrate the choruses are not bland and uninteresting. The chorus in sixteenth-century tragedy adds to the play’s complexity and makes this theater more

---

<sup>186</sup> Jondorff, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

intriguing than it appears after only a superficial reading. The choral function in the plays is actually problematic, subversive, or at times rebellious. Treatment of the different choruses is for the most part rote and lacking in critical interest. Nevertheless, the chorus was a vital element for tragedians to break dramatic illusion and persuade spectators. The chorus interrupts the action to comment upon stage events. Sixteenth-century tragedies often become static and fail to progress because of these choral interludes that only interrupt the action, hence many criticisms of these tragedies. Those tragedians sacrifice developing character and action for achieving greater engagement from the audience, not engagement in the story, but in the propaganda framed by the struggle between Saul and David, Caesar and Brutus, or Creon and Antigone.

### Chapter 3

#### Female Protagonists: More effective tragic heroes for civil-war tragedies

Sixteenth-century French tragedy poses an intriguing question: Are the actions and character of the female tragic hero distinct from the male tragic hero? In tragedy, for example, must female characters be passive and males active? Must these females be either oppressed and marginalized victims or demonic witches?<sup>187</sup> These binary attitudes preclude a third option: female protagonists engage in dangerous and futile and destructive struggles, often against tyranny and oppression.<sup>188</sup> Is this not the definition of all tragic heroes, male as well as female? The rules of tragedy require it to represent a protagonist's futile struggle within and against a political or social arena. In her study on the female tragic hero, Naomi Liebler defines a tragic hero as "the sacrificial victim required by a purgative ritual, whose efficacy as sacrifice signifies above all the symbolic embodiment of whatever threatens the community in crisis."<sup>189</sup> And Bertold Brecht recognizes that tragedy enacts a conflict centered on a human subject who is enmeshed in webs of social, political, economic, and psychological forces.<sup>190</sup> Whether Julius Caesar or Pompey, or Pompey's wife Cornélie, and whether Oedipus, or his daughter Antigone, the protagonist's gender does not alter their heroic struggle, only how the struggle is viewed. French civil-war tragedies suggest that a female protagonist is, in fact, a more effective tragic hero than a male. In

---

<sup>187</sup> See *Tragedy*, esp. pp. 211-13, for a summary of this misleading stereotype in tragedy. Drakakis and Liebler conclude that, "Feminist critics of Renaissance tragedy (for example, Woodbridge, Callaghan, Neely, Bamber, Figs, Spregnether) who have drawn attention to the ways in which the genre of tragedy victimises its female characters have not generally been concerned with the fact that the genre also, with equal frequency and intensity, victimises its males, even or especially those in the plays who themselves victimise females." *Tragedy*, p. 211.

<sup>188</sup> Judith Butler further identifies the failure of these binary models, saying, "The masculine/feminine binary constitutes not only the exclusive framework in which that "specificity" can be recognized, but in every other way the specificity of the feminine is once again fully decontextualized and separated off analytically and politically ... and other axes of power relations that both constitute "identity" and make the singular notion of identity a misnomer." *Gender Trouble*, p. 4.

<sup>189</sup> Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*, p. 12.

<sup>190</sup> See *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*.

these tragedies, female protagonists have a greater capacity to engage audiences in the suffering and misery caused by civil conflict, using her struggle and pain to more effectively break the play's stage-illusion and connect it to violence in sixteenth-century France. The imagery of her suffering permits a wider range of gendered metaphor and allusion, all working to create the greatest effect of *crainte* and *pitié* – the two most fundamental tools of tragedy, tools that best construct and highlight the tragic hero's doomed struggle.<sup>191</sup>

The tragic hero struggles in vain because he or she tries to assert individualism in the midst of oppression or persecution. This autonomy to assert one's will in defiance of fate or the community causes the tragedy's crisis, the tragic hero's struggle, and finally, the hero's downfall. Sixteenth-century French tragedies about men and women show that autonomy, and consequently, the subversive tendencies inherent in autonomy, are not gender specific.

Autonomy drives Caesar to usurp the Senate's power, it drives Saul to disobey God's commands, and it drives female protagonists such as Porcie (Brutus's wife), Cornélie (Pompey's wife), Rezefe (Saul's wife), and Jocasta (Oedipus's wife – *and mother*), to proclaim and then defend a political position, actions that mirror their male counterparts, who are often their husbands. This phenomenon reveals a common cause between male and female protagonists to correct a nation's harmful course, often one leading to tyranny or absolutism.

### **The Widow in Tragedy**

An autonomous female subject could be interpreted as revolt against the patriarchy, but this fails to account for the complex forces propelling the female tragic hero. In civil-war tragedies, for example, the assertion of the female protagonist's independence does not imply a rejection of the early modern patriarchal structure; rather, somewhat paradoxically, her actions affirm it, since

---

<sup>191</sup> Aristotle first recommended fear and pity to best achieve catharsis. See the *Poetics* chapters 6 – 18.

she is fulfilling her duty toward her husband (always deceased) and household in defiance of tyranny; she is continuing the battle in his name. In his critical edition to two tragedies with eponymous female protagonists, *Porcie* and *Cornélie*, Raymond Lebègue remarks that the theme of conjugal love drives both tragedies.<sup>192</sup> This period perceived the family unit as a microcosm of the state – a political household – a household she must hold together when her husband, the head of the household, dies.

A touching image of Cornélie is produced when she receives an urn containing the ashes of her husband. The scene symbolizes her new authority as well as the nation's tragic loss. Through this scene, Lebègue recalls the mission of Robert Garnier, the author of these two tragedies, to choose tragic subjects and protagonists that most effectively display France's misery, a contemporary tragedy best represented through the lens of the Roman civil wars, and through one of her widows. Lebègue explains:

Il [Garnier] était convaincu que ce sujet “propre aux malheurs de nostre siecle” ferait sur les lecteurs français une forte impression et qu’après quatre guerres civiles ils réfléchiraient sur leurs funestes effets ... Et la “calamité” de l’héroïne jointe à celle des Pompé produirait ce sentiment de tristesse que le genre tragique devait provoquer.  
(*Porcie, Cornélie*, p. 261)

At first glance, this superiority of female tragic heroes seems counterintuitive given the subservient status of women in sixteenth-century France. However, the female tragic hero – the fictional character on the stage – gains a privileged status of power, one that places her on a near equal footing with men: she is a widow. All male protagonists are married in civil-war tragedies, while all female protagonists are widows, or are widowed during the course of the tragedy. Antigone is the sole exception to the rule. Nevertheless, sixteenth-century tragedies about Antigone are little more than translations of Sophocles original play, and therefore offer less

---

<sup>192</sup> Lebègue, *Porcie, Cornélie*, p. 261.



insight about sixteenth-century France than ancient Athens. In all other civil-war tragedies, the woman's status as widow alters her role and offers her protection and power.

In theater, it is interesting that young women are portrayed so often as gentle and kind, while widows are scorned for their stubbornness.<sup>193</sup> This phenomenon inspires an intriguing question: How does widowhood give a female protagonist an aura of independence and authority? First, it grants her increased autonomy. Giovanni Giorgio Trissino, in his *Epistola ... de la vita che dee tenere una donna vedova* (1524) identifies the widow as "a free woman: ... such may not be subject to a husband, or a father, or anyone else."<sup>194</sup> Yet he calls it a "bitter liberty," freedom not to be construed socially or politically. Nevertheless, female protagonists do exert a social and political influence in tragedy, a role supported by contemporary examples in France. A widow's new autonomy draws her out of the domestic setting and casts her into the public domain, often a milieu of political intrigue. Yet this is a temporary status. In professional documents in sixteenth-century France, the widow is addressed as "veuve de," emphasizing that she continues in her husband's name, not her own, but also that she receives many of his former privileges. This new title (*veuve de*) replaces her previous "femme de." Does this mean she is no longer a *femme* when a widow?

*Femme* carries a double connotation in French of both wife and woman. When she is no longer a wife, does she lose her womanhood, too? This loss symbolizes her changed status as well as a degree of liberation. In all regions of France, widows of master workers could pursue the professional activity of their deceased husband.<sup>195</sup> Recent scholarship by Madeleine Lazard

---

<sup>193</sup> Zemon Davis discusses the mocking of the "stubborn widow" during the festivals of misrule in her *Society and Culture*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>194</sup> Giovanni Giorgio Trissino, *Epistola del Trissino de la vita che dee tenere una donna vedova*. See Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>195</sup> Berriot-Salvadore, *Les Femmes dans la Société française*, p. 209. See also Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture*, pp. 69, 81. She notes that, "At this stage of life, women outnumbered and outlived men, and even the widow sought after for her wealth might prefer independence to the relative tutelage of marriage." p. 69.

has shown how widows of printers were allowed to run the press, including hiring and overseeing all workers. Lazard suggests widowhood is the only status in the sixteenth century that assures a woman's independence in society. Nevertheless, this aura of independence through widowhood in fact holds her stronger to the family. Lazard offers this caveat:

Mais cette liberté dont jouissent les veuves leur est concédée dans la mesure où elles œuvrent dans l'intérêt de la famille, qui prime alors le sort individuel de ses membres, de l'homme comme de la femme, pour perpétuer le nom et sauvegarder le patrimoine qui en est le soutien indispensable. Car la famille mérite tous les sacrifices des garçons comme des filles, de l'épouse comme de l'époux. (*Avenues de Fémynie*, pp. 95-96)

The widow, therefore, although having gained a certain amount of autonomy, paradoxically adopts the voice of the deceased husband. In civil-war tragedies, her husband is often a great military and political personage – Caesar, Saul, Oedipus – names that remain glued to the family, the political household that reflects the republic. The female tragic hero's position and speech affect the political hierarchy more than the gender hierarchy, and their actions suggest they are not simply rebelling against a masculine ethos or patriarchal authority. Her voice is not suppressed for being female, it is suppressed for carrying on her husband's subversive name, and this name taints the family.<sup>196</sup>

According to Lyndan Warner in her monograph, *The Ideas of Man and Woman in Renaissance France*, a wife's honor depends on the husband's reputation. The couple combines to work for the dignity of the household. The 1561 tragedy, *César*, by Jacques Grévin, displays this marital corporation. Calpurnia's discourse shows that she is the surviving part of Caesar after his assassination, and that her life perpetuates his name. Calpurnia says, "De mon mari César; j'en suis une partie / Qui reste encor' vivante; arrache donc ma vie / Couronnant ton

---

<sup>196</sup> For a contemporary example of a powerful family unit, Dora Polachek's work on Anne d'Este and Catherine-Marie de Lorraine has given insights into their role in the powerful Guise family after the double assassination of the Duke and Cardinal of Guise in 1588. See Dora Polachek, "Le Mécénat meurtrier, l'iconoclasme et les limites de l'acceptable : Anne d'Este, Catherine-Marie de Lorraine et l'anéantissement d'Henri III."

méfait.”<sup>197</sup> She defies Caesar’s assassins to pursue and kill her, too. They must destroy her in addition to Caesar because otherwise, in her words, they will never triumph over Caesar even though he is slain and silenced. She warns her husband’s assassins, therefore, that they have not destroyed Caesar’s political threat. Caesar’s voice can speak through Calpurnia because his household lives, and this voice inspires Caesar’s friends to avenge his death.

Caesar’s assassination and post-mortem vengeance are ironic. It can be argued Caesar himself is slain because of a similar dilemma; the household of his great enemy, Pompey, continues through Pompey’s widow, Cornelia. In the *Tragedie Nouvelle Appellée Pompée* (1579), Caesar has defeated Pompey at the battle of Pharsalus and Pompey has fled to Egypt. The Egyptians assassinate Pompey for fear of harboring Caesar’s enemy. After the chorus (a group of female attendants) discovers his body floating in the sea, his wife Corneille (Cornelia) becomes the de facto leader of the remnant instead of some worthy general or senator. The tragedy concludes with Cornelia’s command, her voice of new authority, to pack up and flee the untrustworthy Egyptians, but through various sources, including Plutarch, it is known she returns to Rome and maintains her dignity as Pompey’s widow. The female protagonist is critical to achieve this justice and retribution (Caesar’s assassination). Pompey’s voice against Caesar never dies because Cornelia lives and continues his household’s mission.

Garnier’s tragedy, *Cornélie*, takes up her story after having returned to Rome from Egypt. Garnier published his *Cornélie* in 1574, five years before the *Tragedie Nouvelle Appellée Pompée* (1579), and although the publication date precedes the *Tragedie Nouvelle Appellée Pompée*, Garnier’s play stages the events of Cornelia’s life three years after her return to Rome. In the capital, Cornelia speaks vehemently against Caesar’s tyranny and cruelty. Cornelia’s lamentations and diatribes coerce a new faction to oppose Caesar’s absolutism. The chorus

---

<sup>197</sup> Grévin, *César*, 933-35.

echoes her laments and compares Cornelia to Lucretia, the Roman virgin raped by a Tarquin, the family of tyrants who once ruled Rome. The chorus recounts:

Encore d'une chaste Lucrece  
 L'honneur conjugal outragé  
 Sera par sa main vengeresse  
 Dessus son propre sang vengé  
 Dedaignant son ame pudique  
 Supporter le sejour d'un corps,  
 Qu'aura l'audace tyrannique  
 Souillé d'impudiques efforts. (*Cornélie*, 607-14)

According to legend, Lucretia's rape sparked Rome's rebellion. Through this analogy and metonymy, the chorus connects the two women to Rome's suffering, and it uncovers their critical role in Rome's liberty. After condemning tyranny, the chorus foresees Brutus will be inspired and avenge Cornelia's suffering, misery that applies to both the female tragic hero and to her surrogate: Rome. The chorus evokes Rome's history with tyrants and recalls:

Mais ainsi que la Tyrannie  
 Vaincra nos coeurs abastardis,  
 Advienne qu'elle soit punie  
 Aussi bien qu'elle eut jadis :  
 Et qu'un Brute puisse renaître  
 Courageusement excité,  
 Qui des insolences d'un maistre  
 Redelivre nostre Cité. (*Cornélie*, 615-22)

When the chorus refers to *Brute*, they recall both the family household and the individual man, the two being indistinguishable. Brutus' Roman family, the *Bruti*, maintained an ancient and distinguished heritage. This family organized and led the resistance against the Tarquins after the rape of Lucretia. The Tarquins were the tyrannical kings who ruled over Rome at the dawn of her history; therefore, the *Bruti* received credit for winning Rome's independence and for establishing the Republic. An emperor, Julius Caesar, would threaten the Republic's autonomy

and return her to a new age of Tarquins. Another Brutus must rise to battle the threat, against which Pompey had fought. Cornelia returns from Egypt with Pompey's conflict against Caesar and his absolutism, and critically passes it over to Brutus. Without the widow's voice and her symbolic suffering, Rome would lose this encouragement to rid itself of the tyrant.

Brutus also dies in this struggle. The story of his widow is staged in *Porcie* (1568), another civil-war tragedy by the Pléiade member, Robert Garnier. In this tragedy, Porcie is recently widowed. Brutus has fallen in battle against Mark Anthony and against Caesar's heir, Octavian, the future Emperor Augustus. The previous tragedies have uncovered that the hero's struggle continues to live through the voice of his widow after her husband's death. In the introduction to his critical edition of *Porcie*, Raymond Lebègue argues that Garnier expresses his political philosophy through Porcie, not through the male characters. Lebègue says, "La philosophie politique de Garnier s'exprime par la bouche de Porcie...Après la nouvelle de la mort de son mari, Porcie 'blasphème' contre les 'Célestes cruels, inéquitables, inhumains,' qu'elle avait qualifiés au second acte de 'justes et bons'." <sup>198</sup> In ancient Rome, it was common for each family to keep the fire burning in the hearth. This flame signified the soul of the family and its continuity through the generations. Porcie continues this duty in the absence of the men by exhorting the public to act against tyranny.

The *Thébaïde* (1584), by Jean Robelin, portrays a widow's intervention that is more active and extensive than Calpurnia, Cornelia, and Porcie. Her activity appears more surprising since her adult sons still live. This tragedy stages the civil war in Ancient Thebes between Oedipus' two sons, Polynices and Eteocles. Their mother, Jocasta, plays intermediary to prevent civil war between her sons. The play closely imitates Statius's epic poem about Thebes. However, in that Latin poem, Jocasta only meets with one of the sons, Polynices, to dissuade him

---

<sup>198</sup> Lebègue, *Notice to Porcie*, p. 243.

from fighting in battle against his brother. In the tragedy, on the other hand, she meets both sons, thus extending her role and influence much more than in the original plays and poems about the Theban civil war.

### **Woman on Top**

In addition to her new autonomy as widow, the female tragic hero gains further authority from her deceased husband in these tragedies when the husband's ghost appears to the widow to encourage her activity. He also bestows upon her the right to speak out. In the 1573 tragedy by Jean de La Taille, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, Saul's ghost exhorts his wife Rezefe to hide their children and grandchildren. Saul commands her:

Va t'en cacher, à fin qu'elle ne meure,  
Nostre lignée et celle de Merobe :  
Epesche toy, qu'on ne nous la derobe  
Pour appaiser demain votre famine,  
Qui n'aura fin si ma race ne fine. (*La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 342-46)

Rezefe, in turn, convinces her daughter Mérobe to help defy the order that the children must be sacrificed to lift the famine plaguing Israel. In order to fulfill this duty, Rezefe and Merobe must quit their domestic setting and enter into the social and political arena, a critical transition that represents her new authority. Until the boys are of age, the women are responsible for ensuring that their family position and honor remain strong. It is interesting that Saul speaks of ensuring "Nostre lignee et celle de Merobe," clarifying the continuity of the family line through his daughter, Merobe.

Since Saul is dead, it is Rezefe who speaks to her grandsons about their duty to avenge the former king. The widow tells them:

Bref, ô mes fils, pour ce qu'en vous je voy  
 De vostre pere encor je ne sçay quoy,  
 Vous empeschez mon ame de le suivre,  
 Et en mes maux vous me faites survivre.  
 C'est c'est par vous qu'il me faut supplier  
 Encores Dieu, et le bien singulier  
 De defier toutes adversitez  
 En mes malheurs encores vous m'ostez

Quand est-ce hélas, que la mort paternelle  
 Vous vangerez sus Achis le rebelle?  
 Et quand vainqueurs de son dieu Ascarot  
 Vous détruirez Gaze, Geth, et Azot?  
 Quand vous verray-je, hélas, sus Israël,  
 Reconquêter le sceptre paternel?  
 Quand rendrez vous nostre race heritiere  
 De son estat et dignité premiere?  
 Quand verron'-nous la semence de Jude  
 Soubs Benjamin remise en servitude?  
 Quand verrons-nous hors du siege royal,  
 Chassé David, comme le desloyal  
 Vous a chassez? ou bien quand verron'-nous  
 Dessus Joabe, Abner vangé par vous? (*La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 377-98)

Rezefe's defiance proves the female protagonist is an agent whose actions progress the plot toward its crisis and tragic conclusion. Her seditious rhetoric attempts to coerce the public to act. Yet Rezefe's seditious behavior is absent from the biblical accounts of this episode. First Samuel, which chronicles the events, only relates how David hands over the children to the Gibeonites to relieve God's wrath. Rizpah (Rezefe) mourns the children, but she neither condemns nor prevents their sacrifice. Also absent from the tragedy is the effectiveness of Saul's family to carry on the civil war between the houses of Saul and David after Saul's death. A passage in First Samuel states, "The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker." (1 Samuel 3:1) These significant additions to Rizpah's role in the tragedy reveal the tragedian's view favoring the superior effectiveness of a female tragic hero over a male

protagonist. Jean de La Taille chooses to center his tragedy on Rizpah because he must feel the audience will identify with her suffering. No tragedy would have the power to move an audience if they were unable to recognize an analogy between themselves and the protagonist, in this case, a female tragic hero.

This annihilation of Saul's family is the tragic conclusion in *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, an ending that does not mirror the biblical accounts of continued warfare between David and Saul's family. The tragedy's conclusion suggests a justified cleansing of the body politic since Saul's nuclear family threatens community peace and stability. The tragedy contrasts the nuclear family (Saul's wife, daughter, and sons) with the political family (Israel). Foucault emphasizes the critical importance of the nuclear family in his *Histoire de la sexualité*. Foucault argues that regulation (homeostasis) lies in the family unit, an area outside the purview of the law. Legal and state powers are impotent to enforce regulations without an alliance with family units who control discourse. According to Foucault, power lies in discourse, because discourse circulates and distributes knowledge. The nuclear family governs this circulation, and the head of household governs the family, a status of great control and power.

Foucault's power model applies to the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies. In these tragedies, when the aims of the nuclear family contradict the state power, or the ruler, this poison in the body politic must be cleansed, such as the example of the execution of Saul's grandsons in *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*. The head of household, whether male or female, becomes a tragic hero by advancing, not the individual, but the family cause. The ruler or the ruler's family, such as Saul's household, must advance the public good. The Israelite community faces this dilemma in biblical stories of Saul and David, always siding with the latter, while admiring the former.



In his *Tragédies saintes* (1562), the playwright Louis Des Masures stages the civil war within Saul's nuclear family, a struggle representing the civil conflict within Israel, and echoing civil war in France. Saul's sons discuss their fear that David is usurping their position in the family, i.e. their inheritance of the kingdom. In Des Masures's tragedy, *David fugitif* (1562), Jonathan, Saul's eldest son, believes the community family (Israel) is more critical than the nuclear family, while his brothers equate the kingdom only with their immediate family. One brother warns the others with the question, "Faut-il qu'en nous chassant il [David] tienne / Le royaume entier, et soit sienne / Notre paternelle maison?"<sup>199</sup> The kingdom and their family are indistinguishable and harm to one is danger to the other. That the kingdom and family are currently in danger is clear and the question becomes whether the greater danger to them both is Saul or David, the father-in-law or the son-in-law. The critical importance of family is extended in Des Masure's third tragedy, *David triomphant* (1562). David's first lines, and the first lines in the play after the Prologue, name Jonathan his brother: "On ne pourrait trouver, mon frère, encore un homme, / Puisque voulez ainsi que frère je vous nomme."<sup>200</sup> Their friendship, their brotherhood, and their family's unity depend on Saul, the father and head of household, while community harmony depends on this family unity.

This power phenomenon outlined by Foucault extends to tragedies about Ancient Rome. In Grévin's *César*, Mark Anthony calls Caesar "Père de la patrie," while Brutus makes a reference to Romulus and Rhemus, two brothers, one who kills the other like Caesar and Pompey.<sup>201</sup> In *Porcie*, Caesar's killers are patricides because, "Ils l'ont pourtant occis, et dans son sang humide / Bourrellement lavé leur dextre parricide."<sup>202</sup> Finally, the critical importance of

---

<sup>199</sup> Des Masures, *David fugitif*, 1395-97.

<sup>200</sup> Des Masures, *David triomphant*, 69-70.

<sup>201</sup> Grévin, *César*, 189; 321-25.

<sup>202</sup> Garnier, *Porcie*, 931-32.

the nuclear family to the nation plays a central role in *Cornélie*, where the chorus reminds the audience, “Nous avons ces jours veu le Gendre et le Beau-père / Se combatre ennemis, Pharsalique miser.”<sup>203</sup> The chorus interrupts the scene and applies the story to “Nous,” that is, to contemporary France. The battle of Pharsalus pitted Caesar against his father-in-law Pompey, symbolizing the war within war that occurs in all civil war.

In tragedy, therefore, an individual represents the nuclear family as head of household and the nation as head of state. When the female protagonist such as Rezefe, for example, becomes the family’s voice, its head of household, she controls this power discourse outlined by Foucault. Rezefe’s discourse becomes threatening when she crosses the threshold from the domestic to political stage. Saul’s ghost passes this power to his widow, an event that legitimates her status, and although she speaks in the name of Saul, she is speaking in the name of a man tormented by an evil spirit, rejected by God, and replaced by David. Rezefe, in *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, and Saul, in *Saül le Furieux*, struggle in the same battle; they try to advance their family’s cause – their autonomy – over the community, Israel, and over God, who must punish this transgression to maintain the sanctity of His Chosen People. Although God judges Saul’s family, the tragedy highlights that the people mete out the punishment. This emphasis, in combination with La Taille’s efforts to expand the stage-illusion, suggests the tragedian aims to exhort the audience to punish France’s ruling family, the Valois, for their role in causing the nation’s crisis.

### **The Supernatural**

The supernatural fulfills a similar role in the 1574 tragedy, *Cornélie*, by Robert Garnier. Pompey’s ghost appears to his wife Cornélie in a dream and tells her to escape with their son,

---

<sup>203</sup> Garnier, *Cornélie*, 37-38.

teach him the art of war, and return to avenge his father.<sup>204</sup> The vision empowers her to leave the home and continue Pompey's battle to thwart Caesar. She is now responsible for the mission to retain the Roman Republic's political independence. Before the battle against Caesar's forces, Pompey exhorts his companions that this is the day they will be either free or dead. Then, he boasts that he will never become a servant to an Emperor, and he will either triumph bravely over tyranny or take his sword and soak it in his own blood, a speech Cornelia echoes after receiving her husband's ashes.<sup>205</sup> Her willingness to commit suicide in a similar fashion to her husband's glorious death magnifies her role as continuing in the husband's name, and shows her courage as equal to male tragic heroes. An upcoming section will discuss further the phenomenon of female suicide and her seemingly masculine death.

Cornelia's vision uncovers an element of the supernatural and its relation to female protagonists. Other characters warn the protagonist about the dangers in trusting visions and the supernatural. The chorus in *Cornélie* warns the play's eponymous female, "Ma dame, je vous pry que d'un idole faux / La nocturne terreur ne rengrege vos maux."<sup>206</sup> Sorcery and the supernatural mark most tragic heroes, both male and female, in the sub-genre of civil-war tragedies. The audience would expect such a hero's downfall because of the clear transgression against Christian dogma. In non-biblical tragedies, the protagonist is punished for this transgression, not by the wrath of God, but by the pursuit of the furies, the goddesses of vengeance whom the Greeks portrayed as ruthless pursuers of sinners on earth.

In Jacques Grévin's *César*, furies pursue Calpurnia and have marked her household. The Nourrice warns Calpurnia, "Madame, entrons dedans, craignant que la furie / N'enaigrisse

---

<sup>204</sup> See Garnier, *Cornélie*, 669-716.

<sup>205</sup> See *Ibid.*, 855-880.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 717-18.

toujours leur audace ennemie / Contre votre maison; n'arrêtons plus ici.”<sup>207</sup> Furies have also marked Oedipus' household for divine retribution. In *Antigone*, furies pursue the family – the household – and not the individual. Megere, a fury, opens the tragedy *Porcie* with a monologue that fills the entire first act. In this monologue, the Fury makes many apostrophes to Rome, anthropomorphizes the land as a body and a tomb, and emphasizes the civil war as family discord. Porcie opens the second act and laments this unwanted attention; Furies pursue the family members regardless of gender, and pursue them to their death. Arguing that the supernatural – witchcraft, sorcery, visions – only applies to women misleads and oversimplifies the complex treatment of gender in these tragedies.

### **To Be a Tragic Hero**

According to Judith Butler's work, gender transcends cultural and biological models.<sup>208</sup> In questions of gender, being contrasts and contends against what is. This ontological approach to gender distinguishes between being male or female, and *to be* being male or female. According to Butler, one cannot be a gender, i.e. man or woman. Discourse creates gender identity, similar to Foucault's theory of discourse and power. The female protagonist is a widow, but she *is being* a tragic hero by her performance of this male-dominated role. To be being a tragic hero requires discourse, not simply imitating a tragic hero, but by creating her identity through speech. The audience recognizes her discourse as both a widow and a tragic hero, and this recognition is critical to inspiring and influencing the audience. A character's death is one manner in which an audience distinguishes the tragic hero from the protagonist in a comedy, for example, a tragic

---

<sup>207</sup> Grévin, *César*, 941-43.

<sup>208</sup> See Butler, especially Chapter One in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

Saul from a triumphant David, or Racine's Phaedra from Molière's *George Dandin*.<sup>209</sup> Death provides women an opportunity to be being a man and step into a heroic role.

Tragic heroes die. Male tragic heroes universally die bravely or cruelly, and often both. Caesar's death shows his courage; he makes the suicidal walk into the Senate after receiving warnings and premonitions. Brutus and Saul both fall on their swords after fighting in vain, yet heroic battles. A good death marks a man with bravery, and in drama, it separates the tragic heroes from the stock characters. In *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, the fear of dying like a woman, and not like a man in battle, concerns David and the Israelites. They desire to avoid a shameful death like any man, "qui dans le lit infame / lamentent de mourir ainsi qu'une femme!"<sup>210</sup> This prevalent fear of dying like a woman contradicts the manner in which female protagonists die in tragedy. These misogynistic characterizations that men die gloriously in battle and women quietly in their beds contradict the reality portrayed in civil-war tragedy. Female protagonists die courageously in these tragedies, proving to be all the more courageous because of their marginalized status, meaning a female protagonist must fight harder and suffer more to attain the distinction of a glorious death.

All female tragic heroes in civil-war tragedies take their own lives, Cornélie being the only exception. Yet Cornélie arrives at her unique suicidal abstinence only after a long discourse against suicide by the wise Cicero.<sup>211</sup> Suicide is an active and courageous choice through which the female protagonist exhibits great bravery and glory. In ancient Rome, this quality of being strong and courageous is expressed by the Latin *vir*. The adjective shares a stem with the noun, man (*vir*, *virī*); a better translation for *vir* might be "manliness." The female tragic hero shares

---

<sup>209</sup> These examples were chosen because of the debate whether sixteenth-century plays about David should be called tragedies, and whether Molière's *George Dandin* should be labeled a comedy.

<sup>210</sup> LaTaille, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 25-26.

<sup>211</sup> In reality, Cornelia never committed suicide and lived the rest of her life on Pompey's estates in Italy.

this quality with male heroes; they are courageous but must suffer and die. Pain and suffering complement the tragic hero's courage, enabling them to take a central role on the political as well as the theatrical stage. *Douleur* and *courage* (*vir*) are the female protagonist's greatest weapons. Her *douleur* inspires the audience's compassion, while her suicide and speaking against oppression or tyranny display her *vir*. The former will enable her to persuade the audience with great effectiveness, but the latter firmly establishes her as an equal of male tragic heroes. The combination of both qualities, of suffering and courage, make the female a more powerful tragic hero. The suicide confirms her in this status.

Dora Polachek analyzes the phenomenon of sixteenth-century women pursuing death in her study of Anne d'Este, where she notes Anne's desire for death at battle's end. In Anne's pamphlet, she calls the king, "Roi tres-bon et clement, s'il me donne la mort comme à mes enfants, pour m'oster de la misere où je suis, et me colloque en la beatitude de Dieu."<sup>212</sup> This expression is similar to Merobe's in *La Famine ou les Gabéonites* when she observes, "Il n'y a que la mort / Qui puisse allegier. Hé doncques qui sera / Qui pour suyvre mes fils aux enfers m'enoyra?"<sup>213</sup> Anne d'Este never spoke of committing the act with her own hand, a violation of Church dogma; this contrasts the suicidal tendencies of protagonists in tragedy.

In *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, Merobe, after hearing the news that her mother Rezefe has taken her own life, decides to imitate her mother's bravery, a family trait. She convinces herself that she must die, and to gain courage she repeats to herself that she must show herself to be the legitimate daughter of the stout-hearted Saul, who fought in his last battle against a Philistine army greatly outnumbering his own. The enemy force wiped out his army and killed

---

<sup>212</sup> Cited in Polachek, *Le Mécénat meurtrier*, p. 441.

<sup>213</sup> La Taille, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 1330-32.

all his sons, and finally, Saul fell on his own sword after he was wounded, defeated, and abandoned. Merobe decides:

Meur' meur' plutost Merobe: et d'un cueur magnanime  
Montre toy de Saül la fille legitime.  
Mouron di-je, mouron : car tant que je vivray  
Mon cueur de ses tourmens ne sera delivré.  
(*La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 1363-66)

By means of her discourse, Merobe is being tragic and heroic, fulfilling Judith Butler's ontological approach to identity. Through discourse and action, Merobe also equates herself with Saul, a courageous yet flawed king, while raising herself to the same status with other tragic heroes, none of whom were conquered by their enemies because they chose their own end.

Jocasta, in the final scene of *La Thébaïde*, also encourages herself to end her life bravely: She gives a similar speech, telling her arm to have courage, to be faithful, and to thrust the blade into her side, a bloody duty she must fulfill. In the final lines of the tragedy, Jocasta says:

Courage donc mon bras, sus, dextre auxiliaire,  
Fidèle à mes desseins, prends ce fer salutaire,  
Et d'un sanglant office ouvre de mille coups  
Ce flanc prodigieux, porte-fils, porte-époux. (*La Thébaïde*, 2363-66)

This intriguing phrasing intentionally blurs distinctions between what is considered male or female in order to qualify her for "manly" actions. Thrusting a sword into the bowels is a courageous and honorable death. Yet it is a manly death, and the manner of Jocasta's death clothes her in manly attire, like a disguise. To remain consistent with the female tragic hero's mission to fulfill the subversive role of her husband, it would be a mistake to interpret the metaphor in her speech as rebellion against patriarchal domination. The knife, representing masculine power and domination, would destroy and rip open her womb, a metonymy of womanhood. This interpretation oversimplifies the complex forces compelling Jocasta to such a

dramatic statement. However, Jocasta as surrogate for France, whose land is being torn open because of the sword, symbolizing war, better accounts for her mission as well as the tragedy's clear allusions to the French civil and religious wars. The ability to combine both masculine and feminine qualities continues to affirm the woman's power as tragic hero.

Meanwhile, if Jocasta's death is manly, then why do sixteenth-century playwrights guide their female tragic heroes to kill themselves, courageously, honorably, and manly? Suicide is a sacrifice for family honor. Jocaste calls it the only "remède" to cleanse the family. These female tragic heroes join the ranks of male heroes – Brutus, Saul, and Cato – who exemplify manly courage (the Roman concept of *vir*), when choosing to take their own life. These parallels establish the manliness of the female tragic hero and mark their suicide as a political statement.

In the tragedy of her name, Cornélie confirms this connection as well as the political nature of her death when she ponders suicide to "Frauder nostre Tyran pour ne luy estre esclave."<sup>214</sup> She desires to free herself, not from the tyranny of men over women, but from tyrant over subject. Cicero disagrees with her thoughts on suicide and argues her suicide would kill the land and harm the Republic. The chorus following Cicero's speech makes the metaphorical connection between Cornelia and Rome. She is, "Comme nostre ville maistresse...L'assujettira sous les Rois." Under a tyrant, the city is like:

...chaste Lucrece  
 L'honneur conjugal outragé  
 Sera par sa main vengeresse  
 Dessur son propre sang vengé :  
 Dedaignant son ame pudique  
 Supporter le sejour d'un corps,  
 Qu'aura l'audace tyrannique  
 Souillé d'impudiques efforts. (See *Cornélie*, 591-614)

---

<sup>214</sup> Garnier, *Cornélie*, 540.



Lucretia was raped by a foreign tyrant, and then she killed herself to show the Roman people their shame and duty to revolt. This story creates an allegory of the political situation in Rome between Cornelia and Caesar. By this allegory, the chorus confirms the connection between woman, land, and Republic. They hint that Cornelia's suicide would inspire the public to overthrow the new tyrant, Caesar, or at the least to expose the evils brought to a nation by absolutism.

It is important to note that these female tragic heroes commit suicide outside the domicile, in the public domain. For example, Porcie swallows hot coals in front of the house, thus refusing to live in silence and in servitude to tyrants, a political statement that echoes Pompey's speech about the honor of dying unconquered. Polachek identifies this connection and argues in her work on Anne d'Este and Catherine-Marie that, "Tout spectacle public de leur douleur répond à un objectif politique bien précis et mûrement réfléchi."<sup>215</sup> After her death, Porcie's servant stabs herself, like a loyal squire after the king dies in battle. After their mistress's suicide, the Chorus turns from the body and addresses the audience. They apostrophize Rome (the audience), to take courage from her noble example and defend their liberty – a direct exhortation to act that implies subversion.

### **Women Inspire Men**

In spite of this distinctly feminine portrait of her suffering, the female protagonist aims to inspire men, not women. The man must liberate the city; meanwhile, the female protagonist's role as tragic hero, like all tragic heroes, limits her part to pain and destruction. Yet the image of suffering and courage inspires men to act. The chorus in *Cornélie* relays an inspiring message to the audience:

---

<sup>215</sup> Polachek, *Le Mécénat meurtrier*, p. 438.

Mais ainsi que la Tyrannie  
 Vaincra nos coeurs abastardis  
 Advienne qu'elle soit punie  
 Aussi bien qu'elle fut jadis :  
 Et qu'un Brute puisse renaître  
 Courageusement excité,  
 Qui des insolences d'un maistre  
 Redelivre nostre Cité. (*Cornélie*, 615-22)

In this tragedy, Brutus explains to the men that they must rescue the woman, a symbol of the *Patrie* and *ville* – feminine nouns in French. Brutus exhorts his co-conspirators:

Nous hommes, nous Romains, ayant le coeur plus mol,  
 Sous un joug volontaire irons ployer le col?  
 Rome sera sujette, elle qui les provinces  
 Souloit assujettir, assujettir les Princes?  
 O chose trop indigne ! un homme effeminé. (*Cornélie*, 1213-17)

Brutus wants the men to see their shame that a woman is fighting their battle for men and in place of them. It takes the indignity of a woman (Cornelia) to illuminate for them the example of a noble Roman. Cornelia is the tragic hero, and Rome's need for a woman to fill this void only reveals its weakness because a man should fulfill this traditionally masculine role, but no man seems to have her courage.

The audience should see the female protagonist's performance of heroism and be inspired to act and to fulfill their duty as men. This message is not limited to the Roman tragedies; it also appears in biblical tragedies. In the tragedy *Saül le Furieux*, the Israelite forces are on the precipice of destruction by a larger and more powerful Philistine army. This world where women must act in the place of men is doomed because:

Nostre Cité sera pleine de volleries,  
 Nous serons exposez à mille mocqueries,  
 Nos Femmes aujourd'huy, nos Enfants orphelins  
 Seront devant nos yeux la proye des Philistins. (*Saül le Furieux*, 55-58)

The men are failing. That is the constant message in tragedies that stage a female tragic hero. A male tragic hero, Brutus or Pompey, for example, also inspires spectators to act and to imitate their actions. Yet the female protagonist is more effective in this role because the sight of a suffering and heroic woman would instill in spectators a more acute sense of shame and indignation, while inspiring greater *crainte* (fear) and *pitié* (pity).<sup>216</sup>

The effort to inspire a maximum of compassion, indignation, and shame is visible in *Porcie*. The female tragic hero addresses a long monologue to the audience, accusing:

Hà païs trop ingrat, vous n'estes assez digne  
D'avoir pour citoyenne une ame tant divine!  
Detestable sejour, vous ne meritez pas  
Qu'un si cher nourriçon demeure entre vos bras!

.....  
Et au lieu de l'aimer vous luy avez fait guerre. (*Porcie*, 1751-56)

By choosing the masculine noun *païs* instead of feminine options – *terre*, *France*, *nation* – Porcie directs this lamentation at the male audience members. In another address, she refers to the land as a woman, and by stabbing her breast, she mortally wounds the fertility of the nation. The land is sterile because it is ravished and violated like a young woman. Porcie laments, “Mais, ô Destins mechans, pourquoy ma longue vie / Ne fut-elle plustost de ce monde ravie.”<sup>217</sup> The tragedy *Porcie* continuously links civil-war violence and its effect on the nation's fertility, symbolized by the woman's breasts. The chorus says, “Ne vindrent demembrer de leurs griffes

<sup>216</sup> Jessica Munns and Penny Richards in *Exploiting and Destabilizing Gender Roles: Anne d'Este*, reveal that the campaign against Henry III owed its success to the feminine leadership of Anne d'Este and Catherine-Marie de Lorraine. The women designed their polemics to inspire a maximum of hatred by evoking a maximum of sympathy. The polemics evoke the mother's tragic loss of her children, and the wife's painful life after her husband's death. Ronsard praised Anne d'Este's beauty in his poem “la Duchesse de Guise,” and the spectacle of this graceful figure under severe tribulation powered the most effective polemic. Munns and Richards, “Exploiting and Destabilizing Gender Roles: Anne d'Este,” pp. 206-215.

<sup>217</sup> Garnier, *Porcie*, 1675-76.

bourrelles / Mon corps pendant encor à vos cheres mamelles?”<sup>218</sup> The next stanza links this violence to Rome, the city who is the suffering and violated female.<sup>219</sup>

These gendered metaphors cannot be ignored; they play a significant role in civil-war tragedies with eponymous female heroes. Metaphor that links the female protagonist to the land and people, and the intense suffering of both, emphasizes the *crainte*, *pitié*, and *douleur* a successful tragedy must portray. Similar to the effort to portray the tragic hero’s *vir*, these qualities are effective weapons in the propaganda battle to sway the audience. For example, Cornélie, in the tragedy of her name, paints Rome’s degradation using a transposed version of a Roman triumph, one that intensifies her own subjugation. She clarifies each detail appropriate to a victim: Rome is a captive woman, head bowed and hands tied behind her as she walks in front of the chariot of her glorious victors. Rome’s enslavement is the tyrant’s triumph. This apostrophe of Rome is common in sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies where Rome easily substitutes for France.

Rome is a city of buildings and monuments, yet it is also a sentient being that feels, suffers, and laments. In her study, *Visions of Rome in Renaissance France*, Margaret McGowen observes, “The links between characters and Rome are close, so intimate indeed that their actions have immediate effects upon the city, and their mental states find echoes in the place itself.”<sup>220</sup> The human body is connected to the land. Suicide, discussed earlier, becomes a major theme in sixteenth-century France as the self-destruction of the French civil wars worsened. Authors and poets would depict Rome as an individual, often a woman, experiencing the pain of defeat in civil war, violence that devastates her virgin and pure body. Tragedies with male protagonists fail to create this intense portrait of *douleur* that a suffering female protagonist can invoke. For

---

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 1683-84.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, see lines 1691-94.

<sup>220</sup> McGowen, *Visions of Rome*, p.275.

this reason, sixteenth-century playwrights return often to female tragic heroes such as Cornelia, Rezefe, Antigone, and Porcie.

In the tragedy, *Porcie*, the servant, *La Nourrice*, laments the deplorable condition of Rome. She begins the address:

Maintenant, (ô chetive) ...

.....  
 Tu souffres, pauvre Rome, hélas! tu souffres ores  
 Ce que tu fis souffrir à la cité des Mores,  
 A la belle Carthage, où tes fiers Empereurs  
 Despouillez de pitié commirent tant d'horreurs. (*Porcie*, 435-442)

The servant gives this lamentation in her first appearance on-stage, thus establishing Rome's suffering as the principal topos, while making the important connection between Rome and Porcie from the play's start. Beginning this lament over Rome with "O chetive" identifies the servant's intention to use Rome and Porcie interchangeably, for when Porcie appears in view during the lament, and before she arrives within hearing, the servant indicates Porcie to the audience as "la chetive Dame."<sup>221</sup> It is clear Porcie remains in view yet out of hearing distance, because when she speaks, she fails to acknowledge the Nourrice until the end of her own lament, and only after the Nourrice poses her a question.

In this lament, Porcie describes the figure of Rome, bent and crippled beneath Caesar's yoke, like the bent back of a helpless subject under the power of a man. These two monologues reveal to the audience that the tragedy is comparable to the Roman civil wars, and by extension, to civil war in France. Porcie is Rome. Porcie is also France; she is the body politic, now become the ruins and lifeless tomb of her people. In addition to this connection, the chorus offers other clues to interpreting the allegory; the chorus of young girls sings a parallel allegory of the feminine "Paix" who battles the masculine "Mars." The chorus asks the lady, Peace:

---

<sup>221</sup> Garnier, *Porcie*, 465-74.

Helas! douce Paix, quand veux-tu  
 Triompher de Mars abbatu?  
 Quand veux-tu cette guerre  
 Ensevelir sous terre? (*Porcie*, 375-79)

Only this Lady has the power to end the misery and suffering of this war:

C'est toy, Deesse, qui nous peux  
 Combler de bonheur si tu veux,  
 Sans toy l'humaine vie  
 D'aucun bien n'est suivie. (*Porcie*, 379-82)

Yet the chorus ends their chant by addressing “nos Empereurs” and the “Peres vieux,” whom they hope to inspire by the image of suffering. The image of *Paix*, struggling to triumph over War, should shame these men and prod them into action.

In this imagery, it is simple to identify the woman as the helpless victim, and since tragedy reveals a repetition of these themes, figures, tropes, and motifs that link the female protagonist to the land and the city, it gives substance to an argument that female characters are only tragic victims instead of tragic heroes. One tragedian, De Coignac, includes the metaphor of the community of believers as the body of Christ, a common *topos* found throughout the New Testament.<sup>222</sup> In his tragedy about David, *La Desconfiture de Goliath* (1550), this body is being violated like a *noble pucelle* that personifies *Verité*. He plays with these feminine nouns to increase pity and sympathy, not for the woman, but for the suffering land and kingdom. Similar to many tragedies with female protagonists, De Coignac evokes Lucretia, the Roman princess who was raped by a tyrant prince and then killed herself out of shame, affirming the connection between woman, city, and land. It seems the actions of female protagonists are all in vain and she is doomed as a sacrificial victim. Yet so is the male tragic hero, and when tragedies evoke

---

<sup>222</sup> The most in-depth treatment of the Christian community as the Body of Christ is found in 1 Corinthians 12.

images of Saul, Oedipus, or Brutus, we see a complete picture of the futile struggle that defines all tragic heroes.

Too much emphasis is given these metaphors as representing a gender struggle, because it fails to comprehend civil-war tragedy's complex relationship to the violence in sixteenth-century France. Grammatically, these metaphors are distinctly gendered; yet are they distinctly feminine, pertaining only to women? These tropes and figures used to lament the female body find their counterpart in the masculine dominated metaphor of the king's two bodies. This political theory clarifies the king possesses an immortal body, the body politic that comprises all the king's subjects, and secondly, his physical, mortal body. When one of these bodies suffers, so does the other. For example, in the tragedy, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, the land and people suffer from a devastating plague. Saul's sin and trespasses have stained the land and the entire body politic. Although Saul's mortal body has expired, his actions still affect the immortal body.

The king's two bodies paradigm helps elucidate the purpose of the tragic hero in tragedies about Julius Caesar, several of which were published in late sixteenth-century France. It was common to equate Caesar with Rome, a connection similar to the one between the city and widow in *Porcie*. In the play *César*, Mark Anthony says tersely, Caesar is Rome and Rome is Caesar, thus warning his assassins about the consequences of their actions. The greatness or death of the man is indistinguishable from the triumph or fall of the city.

In prefatory material, and as discussed in Chapter One, authors commonly call on the audience, whether nobles, kings, Protestants, or Catholics, as well as certain powerful women, for example the king's sister or daughter, to save this body politic that is France. The 1572 edition of *Saül le Furieux* contains a short dedication to Charles IX in which La Taille requests the king to appease the tempests and to look on his kingdom, his own body, with pity. He

specifically addresses the Noblesse, one of the members of the body of the kingdom that is not only causing the destruction of the land, but of their own body. He admonishes the nobles for causing the troubles and misery that is a poison to the kingdom. This war has caused blood to battle against blood, children against fathers, wife against husband, brother against brother, friend against friend. They would be wise to recall the ancient Roman and Hebrew civil wars. Their worst crime is causing division that is a plague, a hydra, and viper that kills the nourishing mother. La Taille's description becomes allegorical and *Ruine, Desespoir, Calmonie, Envie* and *Discord* invade the land – a mixture of both masculine and feminine nouns.

The tragedy *César* (1561) is a germane example of intertwining masculine and feminine metaphor to produce pity. The messenger who announces Caesar's death connects the suffering of Calpurnia, Caesar's death, and the land. Caesar and Calpurnia, husband and wife, kingdom and land, are intimately and irrevocably intertwined. The messenger laments to the audience, "Douce mère de tous, en son giron enserre, / Pleure dessus la mort de ce grand Empereur, / Pourtant que ce désastre est un commun malheur."<sup>223</sup> Therefore, these masculine and feminine images make the audience sympathetic to the tragic hero's cause and compassion for the nation.

Yet the image of the widow and mother inspires the greatest compassion, since even the most illustrious men like Julius Caesar are born of women. The tragedy, *César*, employs the metaphor of Rome as the womb to show the duty of all her great men to the city – their mother. The chorus includes Caesar among these great men:

Heureuse Rome, heureuse ores d'avoir reçu  
L'heur du ciel qu'un César en tes bras fut conçu.  
Heureux aussi, César, maintenant je te nomme,  
Heureux cent mille fois d'être né dedans Romme. (*César*, 125-28)

---

<sup>223</sup> Grévin, *César*, 950-52.



The city, like a woman, is to be either pitied and respected as the nurturing mother, or dominated, as is fitting the lower end of the social hierarchy. In tragedy, the tyranny of men over women translates to the tyranny of ruler over ruled. Brutus's perspective toward the people and city contrasts Caesar's. For the former, the city is to be served as the true source of power, and for the latter, it must be controlled and dominated. Brutus claims the voice of the people guides him as well as shames him into action. He argues:

La voix des citoyens n'a-t-elle le pouvoir  
De t'enflammer le coeur trop abject et servile,  
Te reprochant que Brute est absent de la ville?  
Et pauvre! cependant tu la vois endurer. (*César*, 341-44)

The direct object pronoun "la" finds its antecedent in *la ville*. Brutus's city is like a woman, and his effort to build sympathy for her and to serve her contrasts Caesar's view of the people as an unbridled horse in need of a master. Caesar calls the people, "Le cheval galopant par la plaine sans bride / Ne se laisse dompter par celui qui le guide."<sup>224</sup> Brutus and his companions must kill Caesar because he is unfaithful to the people, like an adulterous husband whom the people should divorce.

Men's shame for inaction extends to their disloyalty to their vows, symbolized by adultery in marriage. Faithfulness and loyalty are critical qualities; the tragic hero displays these qualities in a greater degree than their persecutors. In these tragedies, women prove to be the most faithful, especially to their deceased husbands. In the tragedy *Nouvelle appelée Pompée* (1579), Cornelia gives the message to her young female followers:

Fuyons, femmes, fuyons leur terre, et cruauté  
Leur Roy, et leur conseil, et leur desloyauté.  
Allons veoir ce corps mort. C'est mon mari ce corps:  
Ce corps, vostre Seigneur, Roy tu me fais ces tors.  
(*Tragédie Nouvelle appelée Pompée*, 933-36)

---

<sup>224</sup> Grévin, *César*, 159-60.

Since the protagonist is female, the metaphor must switch gender to emphasize the tragic hero's faithful relationship to her husband (the body politic) – “mon mari ce corps” – instead of the female body. This metaphor switching contrasts the wife's fidelity and the tyrant's disloyalty in their respective relationships to the female tragic hero's husband.

Following Cornelia's command, the chorus of young women gives a homily on infidelity. This homily, and one on the same subject near the beginning of the play, highlights the need to interpret the plot as an allegory of marriage.<sup>225</sup> A woman (the land) is married to a man (the country). She is a mother and worries about her children (the people). The father is like a king and when the father dies, the woman is a widow, and the land barren. The author of the *Tragédie nouvelle appelée Pompée* inserted a marginal note to explain the allegory for the reader. He calls the misery of the children, the “pauvre estat de Rome n'ayant plus Pompee.”<sup>226</sup> Foreign people or armies have not made Rome miserable; the unfaithfulness of Caesar to his father-in-law – civil strife within the family – has ruined Rome.

This civil strife within a family is most pronounced in the *Thébaïde* (1584), where two brothers struggle for the throne of Thebes, ultimately killing one another in battle. Tydee, a friend to one of the brothers (Polynices), condemns the other brother (Eteocles) as “Roi parjure,” and “un brise-foi, un traître, un déloyal / Usurpera ton droit et ton titre royal?”<sup>227</sup> Tydee and Polynices justify their attack against the city, saying the gods would desire them to punish such felony. Polynices is seen in the eyes of his brother Eteocles as an equal transgressor and oath

---

<sup>225</sup> Anonymous, *Tragédie nouvelle appelée Pompée*. See lines 225-86 for this extended metaphor.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, See margin for lines 257-59.

<sup>227</sup> Robelin, *Thébaïde*, see lines 425-29.

breaker, for only a tyrant, “au grand mépris des lois,” could trigger Polynices to gather an army and lay siege to his own people.<sup>228</sup>

Tydee contrasts Eteocles’ unfaithfulness to the friendship and loyalty between him and Polynices. They are joined by “le lien de parfaite amitié,” and this quality makes, “de deux esprits un, possédé de deux corps.”<sup>229</sup> This language of marital harmony reveals the ideal relationship, where two minds and hearts possess one body, without strife, and united for the common good. After outlining this ideal union, one that lends itself to the relationship between king and subject, Tydee contradicts this wisdom and gives a self-condemning statement; he argues a man must master a rebellious wife like a king must subjugate a rebellious people. He considers the people of Thebes in rebellion against their true king. Tydee admits:

C’est pourquoi comme vous j’ai part à la querelle,  
C’est pourquoi de vous voir en la ville rebelle  
Régner sur vos mutins c’est mon entier souci,  
Car quand vous serez roi, je règnerai aussi.”(*Thébaïde*, 511-14)

The equality he previously envisioned only exists among men of equal quality and rank, like he and Polynices, two princes of royal blood. All civil war tragedies contain the *topos* of loyalty/disloyalty. The plays contrast disloyalty and betrayal of one character with the tragic hero’s “parfaite amitié” or faithfulness. Saul’s persecution of David contrasts David’s friendship with Jonathan, and Caesar’s desire for total control as Emperor contrasts Brutus’ and Pompey’s struggle to maintain the Republic. Solomon offers the example of how the wise and just king must proceed. In the tragedy, *Adonias*, he asks God for wisdom to understand and distinguish between good and evil to help him give justice to the people. He humbles himself and promises to be faithful so that “tous en ton Temple Nous nous rendions unis / ... / Reunissant les coeurs en

---

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, see line 497.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, see lines 505-10.

un par ta puissance.”<sup>230</sup> This unity among the people, and the people with the king, is a ruler’s primary duty.

These male protagonists, however, most often fail to achieve their professions of loyalty, while the female protagonists offer a better portrait of fidelity, like the loyal people whom she often symbolizes. The *Thébaïde*, alongside other tragedies about Antigone and her brothers, uncovers this insight. Both brothers are equally disloyal. Their mother, Jocasta, on the other hand, strives in vain to maintain peace and harmony between the brothers. The other female tragic hero in these tragedies, Antigone, remains a loyal, pious daughter while her brothers fight over the kingdom and, “du bien paternel à leur aise jouissent.”<sup>231</sup> This loyalty to family and city constructs a sympathetic image of the female protagonist that makes her a more effective tragic hero.

Analyzing the female protagonist through the lens of patriarchal institutions that suppress and contain her voice simply because it is female ignores a tragedy’s full context of gender representations. This analysis also passes over the lesson for society pertaining to the cost of destroying its surrogate – the tragic hero – whether male or female. Tragedies target these tragic heroes (Caesar, Saul, Cornelia, Rezefe, Antigone) as subversive voices that authority must suppress, contain, and destroy because they question their right to rule. The sub-genre of civil-war tragedies evokes the crucial emotions of *crainte* and *pitié* that are fundamental elements of all tragedy, and this sympathy is best inspired by a female tragic hero. The number of female eponymous characters in sixteenth-century tragedy supports this conclusion, and it is a phenomenon that deserves further study.

---

<sup>230</sup> Philone, *Adonias*, 1284,1300.

<sup>231</sup> Robelin, *Thébaïde*, 113.

While men suppressed women and forced upon them a secondary status in sixteenth-century France, the woman's position as tragic hero in sixteenth-century French tragedies shows a status of surprising equality with male tragic heroes. That equality would be misapplied to contemporary social, economic, or political status; in tragedy, on the other hand, both male and female tragic heroes have an equal design to struggle against oppression and die courageously. Moreover, the female protagonist proves to be a more effective tragic hero than a male. Decimus Brutus philosophizes in the tragedy *César* that, "On dit, on dit bien vrai: la femme impérieuse / Fait plus avec les pleurs qu'un guerrier furieux."<sup>232</sup> In these tragedies, female protagonists have a greater capacity to engage audiences in the suffering and misery caused by civil conflict, using her struggle and pain to more effectively break the dramatic illusion of the play and connect it to violence in sixteenth-century France. The imagery of her suffering permits a wider range of gendered metaphor and allusion, all working to create the greatest effect of *crainte* and *pitié*, qualities that best construct and highlight the tragic hero's doomed struggle.

---

<sup>232</sup> Grévin, *César*, 776-77.

## Chapter 4

### A Dialogue of Resistance

The sub-genre of civil war tragedies produced a subversive representation of royal authority because they staged disobedience to that authority, inspiring dangerous political interpretations of the performance. In civil-war tragedies, power hierarchies create tensions regardless of its nature – political, social, religious, or courtly. Similar to *Macbeth*'s legacy in English Renaissance drama, French civil-war tragedies portray the dangerous balance between legitimate rule and actual power, the imbalance appearing because of a weak or questionable ruler opposed by a powerful subject. For example, David overpowers the anointed king Saul, Antigone contests Creon, and Brutus slays Caesar. When the traditional authority is not the strongest element in the state, nations divide and disorder reigns. Sixteenth-century French tragedy dramatizes this warning: kings must devise how to convert their royal legitimacy into actual power and obedience; a prince's failure and impotency lead to unstable competition between forces, and finally, civil conflict. Revolt, however, was not the immediate solution offered by those discontent with the king and the royal court. By disrupting the stage-illusion and extending the dramatic world, civil-war tragedies stage the contemporary dialogue between loyalty and revolt, and mark the escalation from simple dialogue to regicide – Henry III was assassinated in 1589 and Henry IV in 1610. This chapter aims to highlight the paradigm shift from dialogue to resistance in civil-war tragedies that hinges around 1572, a notable year because of the St. Bartholomew Day Massacres.

This political climate affected drama; tragedy mirrored the atmosphere of civil unrest and reflected the weakened image of authority in late sixteenth-century France. Reasons for the

Crown's weakness during the French civil and religious wars were multifarious and complex, but an analysis of these tragedies suggests that the failure to fashion authority was crucial. For example, tragedies staged the ancient Triumph, the quintessential confirmation of grandeur, yet instead of reflecting a ruler's power, the Triumph revealed his impotence. Tragedy also portrayed how the ruler may become either powerless, at the mercy of contending forces, or a tyrant. Various ways tyrants unmasked themselves in these tragedies were by their tirades, madness, paroxysm, and arbitrary decisions. In addition to this condemning image, plays created a symbolic connection between tyranny and the biblical concept of idolatry when the sovereign established himself as an icon, and created a new theocracy based on the worship of his person - direct competition with God that cast doubt on the sanctified right to his theocratic office. Confirming the ruler's transgression was a necessary step to affirm the right, and according to some, a duty to revolt.

The civil conflict in France developed from scholarly debate in the 1550s, to warfare in the 1560-70s, to regicide in 1589 (Henry III). After the Huguenot capture of Orléans (1561), Protestant leaders issued a manifesto of loyalty and non-rebellion. The manifesto outlined their desire to support the monarchy and avoid open warfare, yet the move precipitated the First War of Religion. Calvinist playwrights confirmed this initial position of passive resistance in tragedies based on biblical stories of Saul and David. Investigating these tragedies illustrates how positions toward royal authority changed and developed from the outbreak of war in 1562 to the traditional, but questionable, end of the civil war period in 1598 with the Edict of Nantes.<sup>233</sup>

Civil-war tragedy also reveals the change toward royal authority by Catholics and Protestants

---

<sup>233</sup> Traditionally, historians use the dates 1562–1598 to mark the period of the Wars of Religion in France but there has been much recent debate about the accuracy of these dates. R.J. Knecht and Arlette Jouanna have convincingly shown that the civil wars continued into the seventeenth century and this study of tragedy will support and clarify this more accurate timeline.

when it became clear in the late 1580s that the Protestant Henry IV would be the next king of France. Contingent circumstances, therefore, affected how tragedians viewed the subjects of their plays and then adapted this mutable perspective of contemporary events to tragedy in order to contribute to the debate for or against revolt, and for or against regicide.<sup>234</sup>

The debate began in the domain of religious controversy. Martin Luther and Jean Calvin produced an enormous quantity of essays, sermons, and biblical commentaries in which they argued Christians must patiently suffer and endure the oppression of a tyrant prince. The powerful influence of these two men and their arguments for loyalty and respect for royal power, founded on the king's divine right to rule, contributed to delaying open warfare. After the First War of Religion erupted, rebelling Protestant groups continued to insist that they supported the monarchy, and in France, Protestant leaders claimed they were only attempting to liberate the young king Charles IX and his mother, Catherine de Medici, whom the self-appointed Triumvirs, François de Guise, Anne de Montmorency, and Jacques de Saint-André had reportedly kidnapped.<sup>235</sup> This group of men had taken control of Paris with an army of 2000-3000, proclaiming to maintain peace in the capital in the aftermath of turmoil caused by the Massacre in Vassy (March 1, 1562).

Condé and other Protestant leaders also defined their revolt as a defensive action; they wanted to ensure the enforcement of the Edict of January (1562), a document that had given a certain measure of religious tolerance and freedom of worship after the failure of the Colloquy of Poissy the preceding year.<sup>236</sup> The Triumvirs, from the perspective of the Protestant leaders,

---

<sup>234</sup> See Chapter 1 of this dissertation: Grévin's *César* has been interpreted as a call to tyrannicide and also as a warning against it.

<sup>235</sup> The three triumvirs were Montmorency, the contemporary governor of the Paris region, the strongly influential Duc de Guise, and Saint-André.

<sup>236</sup> The Edict gave Protestants the right to preach outside the town walls during daylight hours. It also allowed Huguenot noblemen to hold services on their estates. The Edict of January created much controversy among



opposed the edict and neglected its terms and provisions. Condé wrote a *Déclaration* in April 1562, an apologetic that justified his taking up arms. In his words, he was a prince of the blood, “à qui appartient de droit naturel de défendre les sujets du Roi contre ceux qui voudraient les opprimer par force et violence.”<sup>237</sup> These arguments will appear as the model for justified revolt in numerous documents – pamphlets, defenses, poems, and theater – by all sides during the French Wars of Religion.

### Ambiguous Visions of Triumph

Participants in these fiercely contested debates first had to establish a firm standpoint of accepted authority in order to gain legitimacy for their position. Recognition of authority was unstable and depended heavily on social perceptions. The sixteenth-century nobleman, La Roque, indicated the critical importance of the social perception of authority in the *Traité de la Noblesse* where he observed, “Il ne suffit pas d’être noble, mais qu’il faut être réputé tel.”<sup>238</sup> Moreover, Renaissance scholars explained that the etymology in Latin of *nobilis*, descended from *noscibilis*, which meant recognized, or *connu*. These observations illustrate that authority was determined relationally and that the community must be complicit in the acceptance of sovereignty. An invisible force of seemingly capricious spectators conferred power on authority. Born during this period, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) put it succinctly in his opus *Leviathan* that the, “reputation of power is power.”<sup>239</sup> Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century princes and monarchs clearly recognized this dilemma and the dramatic rise in popularity of the Triumphal Entry is evidence

---

Catholics because concessions were seen as a sign of weakness; any compromise with Protestants was an acceptance of heresy.

<sup>237</sup> *Déclaration faite par Monsieur le Prince de Condé... Protestation* (Orléans, 8 avril 1562), published in *les Mémoires de Condé*, edition in London, 1740, vol.III, pp. 195-221.

<sup>238</sup> Cited from Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte*, p. 18.

<sup>239</sup> Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Part I “Of Man.” See also Heinz Schilling, “Calvinism as an Actor in the Early Modern State System around 1600: Struggle for Alliances, Patterns of Eschatological Interpretation, Symbolic Representation,” p. 169.

of this understanding. Margaret McGowan has explained in detail how the Triumph in Renaissance France was a common *topos* that conveyed notions of Roman authority and greatness.<sup>240</sup> She also makes important comparisons between the Triumph and theatricality as a pair of tools used to construct perceptions of authority.

The Triumphal ceremony captured the essence of Rome's glory and conveyed notions of the city's ancient power. Renaissance Rome hosted an increasing number of French travelers: merchants, diplomats, artists, and scholars, who viewed the ruins of former glory and returned to France with visions of palaces, obelisks, columns, and arches. They applied Rome's greatness to France and attempted to show that Paris had displaced Rome as a new imperial capital. In France, Petrarch's *Triumphs*, descriptions and illustrations of ancient triumphs, were copied, printed, richly illustrated, engraved on glass, and sewn into tapestries: Rome had moved to Paris.<sup>241</sup>

What was this ceremony that awed spectators? In ancient Rome, Triumphs wedded concepts of city and empire and reinforced Rome's divine foundation and imperial destiny; theatricality was essential to construct perceptions of strength. The logical outcome of military achievement was to enjoy recognition of prowess through the granting of a series of Triumphs. The climax of Caesar's career was his five triumphal entries. Emperors such as Caesar and Augustus became their own historians, fashioning, shaping, and molding their images for the public.<sup>242</sup> The Emperors aimed many of their acts at promoting perceptions of the city's greatness, which they linked to their personal image to secure power and control of public

---

<sup>240</sup> "Renaissance princes required triumphant projections of their aspirations and achievements to reinforce the theatricality which attached to their function and characterized their courts. A propagandist impetus was abroad, blending the authority and status of the ancient world with sixteenth-century visions of what fitted the person and the court of a prince." McGowan, *Vision of Rome*, p. 313.

<sup>241</sup> The extensive number of French manuscripts of Petrarch's *Triumphs* is given by Konrad Eisenbichler in the essays he edited with Amilcare A. Iannucci in *Petrarch's Triumphs. Allegory and Spectacle*.

<sup>242</sup> For Roman preoccupation with fame and self-projection, see Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown*.

opinion. McGowan observes that, “In public perception, therefore, the power of the two [Emperor and City] were synonymous; to evoke the greatness of one automatically brought to mind that of the other. Caesar was Rome.”<sup>243</sup> It is interesting that later emperors and many writers (Petrarch, Dante, and Erasmus) used Caesar Augustus as their model to be emulated. For French historians and writers, beginning in the Middle Ages, Julius Caesar remained the dominant figure because he was considered the first Roman Emperor, a personification of imperial power and glory.<sup>244</sup> This image culminated in France with Louis XIV and the formula: *L’Estat, c’est Moi*.

Many Renaissance princes understood the value of the ancient performance to solidify their imperial pretensions - a conclusion supported by the dramatic rise of Triumphal Entries in sixteenth-century Europe. Charles V, for example, was known as *sa Cesarée Majesté* and was regarded as another Caesar. To enhance his image as Holy Roman Emperor, he entered Rome in 1536 through triumphal arches modeled on Constantine’s structures. Charles V and the Holy Roman Emperors claimed a legitimate heritage dating directly to Caesar and building their Roman image affirmed the claim. Pope Julius II also adopted these comparisons for the Papacy and was delighted when the apothegm *veni, vidi, vici* was attributed to him and then inscribed on a triumphal arch on Palm Sunday. Other princes and rulers imitated these strategies: Caesar Borgia adopted the model *aut Caesar aut nihil* and Maximilian I had a personal copy of the *Commentaries* as well as planned a triumphal entry into Rome as Caesar.<sup>245</sup>

---

<sup>243</sup> McGowan, *op. cit.*, p.285. This self-fashioning was an integral part of being emperor, found not only in their writings, but also in the design of coins. The coins contained emperors’ significant triumphs or other life events. Coins and their commentary reflected the fusion of the emperor with the symbols of his deeds and of Rome itself.

<sup>244</sup> See Jeannette Beer, *A Medieval Caesar*. In this book, she shows the focus on Julius Caesar and how nearly all manuscripts about history of the twelve Caesars end with the death of Julius Caesar.

<sup>245</sup> See Lary Silver, “Paper pageants: the triumphs of Maximilian I” in *All the World’s a Stage*, pp 293-331.

These strategies appeared in France.<sup>246</sup> The French king, Charles VIII (1483–98), also adopted *veni, vidi, vici* during his invasion of the Italian peninsula since it was inscribed on monuments erected to greet him. Attempting to establish his authority at the beginning of his reign, Francis I (1515–47) made a triumphal entry into Rouen in 1517 to the raising of an equestrian statue of the king with the inscription: “Rome, avec un tel César, devient une autre Rome.” When Henry II (1547–59) planned a grand entry Lyon in 1548, a few months after ascending the throne, Maurice Scève organized an elaborate spectacle with an obelisk, five classical arches filled with statues, three columns, and simulated ruins.<sup>247</sup> For his entry into Rouen in 1550, Henry II fused French and Roman elements: he wore French robes of state, but carried a scepter and a laurel branch. He cut his hair short, *à la cezarienne*, and the goddess Fortuna held the imperial crown above his head. The verb *cesariser* entered the language at this time, many princes trying to present themselves with Caesar’s qualities and renown. Guillaume Budé was overcome by all the triumphal entries and Roman images and became preoccupied with the dignity of the French court. He filled many pages of his *L’Institution du prince* (1547) with details about Pompey and Caesar’s majesty and power.<sup>248</sup>

Were these princes successful? Eyewitness accounts concluded these triumphs enhanced the king’s and nation’s power – often interchangeable. The author of *Entrée à Paris* (1549) called Henry II “Roy triumpheur” and his subjects “aussi bien triumpheurs que les Romains.”<sup>249</sup> The preface to *Le Grand Triumphe* declared, “Et ne puis croire que le triumphe tant renommé de César fust de si grande valeur et estime que cestuy-cy.”<sup>250</sup> An observer of the

<sup>246</sup> Much good research on French triumphs can be found in the three volumes: *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance*, ed. Jacquot. See also Bernard Guenée and Françoise Lehoux, *Les Entrées royales françaises de 1328 à 1515*.

<sup>247</sup> See Richard Cooper’s facsimile edition, *L’Entrée...à Lyon*. Arizona, 1997.

<sup>248</sup> Guillaume Budé *L’Institution du Prince* published in *Le Prince dans la France des XVIe et XVIIe siècles*, pp. 123-30 and pp.110-11.

<sup>249</sup> McGowan, *Vision of Rome*, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.* p. 325.

Lyon Triumph, Denis Sauvage, recorded, “Et fust ceste entrée assez magnifique et superbe, pour estre parangonnée aux triomphes des Scipions, Pompées et Césars tant vantez aux hystoires Rommaines.”<sup>251</sup> In addition to these public spectacles, the tombs of Louis XII and Francis I at St Denis pictured military triumphs with arches and chariots. Artists also depicted Henry II as an emperor on engravings, statues, and gold coins.

Nevertheless, this grand image of kingship changed in France from early to late sixteenth century when a succession of weak Valois kings used imperial comparisons to convey unrealistic aspirations of empire. Charles IX (1560–74) and Henry III (1574–89) tried to impress foreign visitors with outward displays of strength, but their triumphal processions only betrayed the discrepancy between their pretensions and reality.<sup>252</sup> Michel de Montaigne observed these triumphs and remarked, “Cest une espèce de pusillanimité aux monarques, et un tesmoignage de ne sentir point assez ce qu’ils sont, de travailler à se faire valloire et paroistre par despences excessives.”<sup>253</sup> Their triumphs failed to instill greatness and an altered vision of the triumph surfaced that became a paradox. In contrast to the permanent monuments built by the Romans, triumphal structures in Renaissance France were mostly temporary, as ephemeral and weak as the last Valois kings. The kings and their triumphs possessed the form of the Roman image, yet without the substance of its power. Tragedians grasped the irony of these failed triumphs to display the king’s impotency.

Sixteenth-century tragedy suggests a changing picture of kingship through this display of evanescent power and weak authority. In his three tragedies, the *Tragédies saintes* (1562), Des Masures applies this imagery of weak kingship to Saul because God and the people have rejected him as king. Des Masures employs irony to the episode of triumphal entry in the second tragedy,

---

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333-35. For the details regarding Charles IX’s entry into Paris, see *Charles IX, L’Entrée ... à Paris*.

<sup>253</sup> Montaigne, *Essais*, III, vi, 902.

*David triomphant*, to confirm Saul's failure. The tragedy unfolds while the army marches to the capital where citizens prepare a grand triumph and a festival to celebrate victory over the Philistines. This triumphal scene appears not only at the apex of the second tragedy, but the episode also spurs the crisis for the entire trilogy of plays (when Des Masures' three plays are studied as one unit). The structure of the three tragedies forms a chiasmus, at the center of which is the triumph, a triumph that contrasts David's success and strength with Saul's failure and weakness. David constantly rises to glory in contradistinction to Saul's fall. This movement becomes apparent only after the triumphal procession.

The reason for the celebration is recorded in the first play, *David combattant*, when David defeats Goliath. The defeat causes the Philistines to panic and their disorganized flight from the battlefield leads to Israel's easy victory. This victory inspires a triumph at the capital for the hero of the battle, for unlike a general victory celebration, a triumph honors a leader, general, or prince responsible for a great victory - it honors one man. Saul is the general and the king; David is a boy and a shepherd. Saul should receive the Triumph in the second play, not one of the ordinary soldiers in his army. The prologue to *David triomphant* announces these expectations for the king: "Ici le roi Saül qui en cette guerre a / La victoire, en honneur retourner on verra."<sup>254</sup> This remark highlights the discrepancy between Saul's pretense of power and the reality of the situation. Saul and his general, Abner, foresee a triumph that honors the king and Abner informs Saul that the people, "Vont chantant leur secours aux danses par les rues. / Toutes vont s'appêtant pour le royal festin."<sup>255</sup> Meanwhile, the king's oldest son and heir to the throne, Jonathan, swears an oath of loyalty to David. The two young men declare publicly they are brothers, not only through the oath, but also through blood, because Saul promised to give his

---

<sup>254</sup> Louis Des Masures, *David triomphant*, 41-42.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 295-6.

oldest daughter to Goliath's conqueror. The new relationship raises David's status and establishes his legitimacy as a prince of the royal family. Combined with his divinely favored victory over Goliath, David's new rank threatens Saul's kingship.

Tension increases while the army marches steadily and ominously toward the city. David's success will upset Saul's triumphal hopes along with his unquestioned authority over the nation. It is evident to everyone except Saul that the Triumph will honor the true victor: David. Jonathan explains his excitement to David, revealing whom the people honor:

J'ai plus d'aise de voir comme par la contrée  
 Vous recevez l'honneur de mainte belle entrée,  
 En triomphe conduit dedans chacune ville,  
 Que si même l'amas de la tourbe civile  
 Me venait au devant et tel honneur exques  
 Etait, par fait de guerre, à moi-mêmes acquis. (*David triomphant*, 107-12)

David's brothers also recognize who will receive the distinction for the upcoming triumph. They observe:

C'est bien grand' merveille qu'on voie  
 Ainsi d'allégresse et de joie  
 Le peuple partout incité  
 Sortir de chacune cité  
 Au devant du roi arrivant,  
 Qu'ils viennent ensemble au-devant  
 De David notre jeune frère  
 Et qu'on ne lui fait moins de chère  
 Qu'on ferait même au fils du roi. (*David triomphant*, 139-47)

Finally, the chorus, the voice of the people, repeats a chant several times to emphasize the conclusion: "Israël amène en joi / David triomphant."<sup>256</sup> Saul must cede the triumph to David, a common shepherd. This humiliation creates the primary source of contention in the tragedies

---

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 1260-96.

because it implies he has lost his hold over the people. The triumph, therefore, becomes an effective literary device to expose the hollowness of Saul's power instead of his might.

In addition to the *Tragédies saintes*, all civil-war tragedies about David and Saul contrast the two leaders, the rise of the one and the fall of the other. Yet discrepancies arise between the tragedies and the biblical accounts of Saul and David. For example, Des Masures avoids the biblical conclusions for David's rise in contradistinction to Saul's fall from grace. In the trilogy, Saul does not become an obsessed tyrant because he sacrificed without Samuel (1 Samuel 14); he does not become one because he failed to destroy the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15); he does not become mad because he is possessed by the evil spirit. In these tragedies, Saul becomes a tyrant because he failed to fashion his power through the people's support, highlighting the importance of image to fashion Renaissance kingship, and essential for the image was the Triumph.

In *David triomphant*, Saul's sons, except for Jonathan, foresee the dangerous consequences of a Triumph honoring David. David's victory, they whisper, will cause him to hunger for more power and he will inevitably desire to usurp the crown, or David's rise will weaken royal authority. That is the danger of sharing power. The triumphal entry flatters Saul's vanity and pride, and in the tragedy, Satan perceives an opportunity in that pride to regain a foothold in Israel after his failure with Goliath, whose defeat by David is recounted in the first tragedy. Satan plans to use the seductive image of power to enflame Saul's envy. The Fallen Angel announces his strategy to twist the triumphal entry, a symbol of power, into a sign of failure. Satan says:

Il faut qu'il rencontre à l'entrée  
 Quelque chose mal rencontrée.  
 Il faut troubler la fête et faire  
 En mal retourner tout l'affaire. (*David triomphant*, 1453-56)



This speech and the tragedy as a whole would break the dramatic illusion of the stage, and its images would transfer from Ancient Israel to sixteenth-century France because a contemporary audience, especially a sympathetic Huguenot audience, would interpret this triumphal episode through the lens of contemporary events (Israel – France, Saul – Charles IX, Saul’s sons – royal court, David – Huguenots). Saul’s failed triumph proves the loss of the king’s divine support as well as the shifting of his power to David, who has gained the right to rule from both God and the people.

Satan’s speech, combined with the triumph, mark Saul’s alliance with Satan and descent into tyranny. The army arrives outside the capital. They symbolically crest a hill in disciplined and orderly formations, banners waving. The people catch sight of David who holds high the Goliath’s head, bloody symbol of his triumph over the uncircumcised tyrant. The people burst into joyous song and the women exclaim in a proud chorus, how Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten thousands. With this chant, the people signal David as greater than the king.<sup>257</sup> Saul claims a chasm has opened between himself and the people. David has upstaged his king. The Triumph is the ultimate symbol of power, and it belongs to David. David says, “Seigneur, la tête fière au bout du glaive jointe / A ton peuple aujourd’hui soit évident spectacle / Pour de ton grand pouvoir témoigner le miracle.”<sup>258</sup> Goliath’s gargantuan head becomes a metonymy for the tyrant. Goliath’s character – arrogance, pride, idolatry – now applies to Saul. David has conquered Goliath and will raise above Saul, who replaces Goliath as the tyrant in opposition to David, the new sanctified leader of the Chosen People.

Saul never recognizes the threat to his authority until he witnesses the people’s reaction. He is not jealous of David’s victory over the Philistine, Goliath, only that his subjects are giving

---

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 1565-1612.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 1528-30.

David more praise. Since Saul never looks toward God like David, he mistakenly places the source of power in the voice of the people and in the material objects of kingship – scepter, crown, triumph. Saul’s anger rises and he furiously casts his spear at David who is forced to flee into hiding in the desert. Saul’s jealous actions and escalation to tyranny creates a rebellion that will tear apart the family and the body politic. The triumph first reveals his weakness. Saul falls into tyranny because he fails to compete with David’s glory. Saul confesses that this is the source of his rage: “Puis qu’on vienne chanter, qu’on vienne faire fête / De ses faits glorieux, de sa brave conquête!”<sup>259</sup> David and the people owe Saul allegiance since he is the Lord’s anointed king. God’s grace, however, has transferred to David and legitimated his separation from the king. A king needs recognition from the people for his victories to remain in a strong position. This triumph should bond the people to the king, but it fails. Instead, it exposes the paradox of a triumph when the king’s pretenses fail to align with reality.

To celebrate a triumphal entry into Paris in 1571, the citizens of the capital gave a gift to Charles IX. It was a picture depicting the king’s triumphal entry. His mother, Catherine de Medici, had engineered a tour around France on the concept of the triumph and projection of royal power, but this attempt unambiguously failed. The most tragic and disastrous event of the French civil and religious war, the Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre, occurred the year following these triumphs. In civil-war tragedies, the Failed Triumph reveals how the meanings of Triumph are multiplied and amplified in Renaissance France. It contrasted Roman glory and power with the weakness of central authority (the ruins of former glory), a message that applies to late sixteenth-century France where imperial pretensions increased, yet remained unsupported as one weak Valois king after another took the throne.

---

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 1635-36.

Roman civil-war tragedies also mock efforts to enhance an image of power by awing the people with a triumphal entry. They emphasize the *lieu commun* of capricious fortune in addition to displaying the irony of a triumph for a ruler who has gained victory only over his own people in civil war. In Garnier's *Cornélie* (1574), Cicero, the personification of wise counsel, warns these tawdry princes, "Tu te vantes en vain de tes nobles ayeux, / Tu racontes en vain tes faicts victorieux."<sup>260</sup> In his discourse, Cicero references the ephemeral power of Ancient Carthage and Troy, two witnesses to the fate awaiting the powerful.<sup>261</sup>

Tragedy consistently portrays this ironic vision of the Ancient Triumph. In Grévin's *César* the chorus contrasts the fleeting image of grandeur surrounding a triumph, and the true grandeur inspired by honor.<sup>262</sup> A triumph only deceives both people and princes. It marks the illusory culmination of glory, followed inevitably by a downfall, the essence of tragedy. In *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, La Taille mentions triumph only to contrast the misery that follows victory: "Pourquoy de tant de Roys l'as tu fait triompher?"<sup>263</sup> La Taille poses the question in this tragedy: Why does God exalt a strong king like Saul only to watch him fall? Cornélie also recognizes the true symbolism of the triumph by contrasting the former glory of her slain husband, Pompey. In the tragedy of her name, she perceives the irony in her husband's past triumphs: "Et que Romme t'ait veu trionfer à trois fois / Des trois parts de la terre asservie à ses loix?"<sup>264</sup> Now the great Pompey (Pompey Magnus) is dead and powerless.

The theme of failed triumph mirrors the symbolism of Roman ruins, a common *topos* in Renaissance art and literature. In his *Antiquités de Rome*, Du Bellay opposes the ancient splendor of Rome to the present rubble, drawing moral lessons from Rome's greatness, decline, and fall.

---

<sup>260</sup> Garnier, *Cornélie*, 87-88.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 493-500.

<sup>262</sup> Grévin, *César*, 240-44.

<sup>263</sup> Jean de La Taille, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 123.

<sup>264</sup> Garnier, *Cornélie*, 321-22.

In Sonnet III, Du Bellay evokes the irony: “Nouveau venu, qui cherches Rome en Rome / Et rien de Rome en Rome n’apperçois.” (III, 1) This paradox of Rome’s imagined greatness uncovers disappointment in the city’s actual weakness. In the same sonnet, Du Bellay presents the irony and contradiction inherent in the ruins of the former imperial capital: “Voy quel orgueil, quelle ruine.” (III, 5) *Orgueil* and *ruine* are both physical and moral states; the state of buildings and monuments reflect the greatness of the people. The ruins reflect the weakness of central authority, a weakness seen during the French civil and religious wars.

In 1574, Henri de La Tour d’Auvergne, Vicomte de Turenne, joined the revolt of the *Malcontents* and soon found himself fleeing from the King’s forces.<sup>265</sup> The King ordered various groups of soldiers to track Henri and discover his whereabouts, but the leaders of these searches invariably returned to the king empty-handed. They weakly pursued the Vicomte because they feared attack by those loyal to him. In his *Mémoires*, La Tour laughed at the king’s impotent efforts to pursue and capture rebel nobles, who found refuge in their home regions and moved with impunity because the locals refused to betray these nobles to the king’s forces. La Tour noted that other nobles visited him in exile without fear of reprisal; all scoffed at the king’s powerlessness.<sup>266</sup>

This breakdown of the king’s image of power, portrayed by the failed triumph, is difficult to trace because prior to the period of open civil and religious war in France, from the last half of the fifteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth century, the nation had enjoyed an extended era of vigorous and able leadership.<sup>267</sup> However, the succession of unstable, Valois monarchs

---

<sup>265</sup> The Malcontents were discontent with Henry III’s treatment of the old French nobility and his ambitions to absolutism. The Malcontents allied themselves with the Huguenots during their revolt.

<sup>266</sup> See Jouanna, *Devoir de révolte*, pp. 34-37.

<sup>267</sup> Roughly 1461–1559 and encompassing the reigns of Louis XI, Charles VIII, Louis XII, Francis I, and Henry II. Baumgartner: “Kingship was largely what the individual king wanted to make of it and what effort he was willing to expend to be a strong ruler.” Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 4.

(1559–1589) highlighted the fact that France remained a divided state composed of contending regions, classes, and confessional groups, holding onto local traditions and customs. *Un roi, une foi, une loi* remained an illusory ideal and fundamental problems emerged.

An analysis of tragedies concerning the power struggles between David and Saul, Julius Caesar and his opponents, and Antigone and Creon discloses many layers in the complex and antagonistic traditions of political and religious authority in France. The discord portrayed in these plays reflects the tension between competing customs in France. These power divisions were sharply contested during the civil and religious wars and undermined efforts to consolidate and unify authority. The modern nation state, organized with a strong and orderly central authority, continued to suffer birthing pains in early modern France, a period to which historians have recently applied the concept of composite government.<sup>268</sup> France remained physically and culturally divided and several regions such as Navarre, Savoy, Orange, and Brittany survived as sovereign kingdoms until the beginning of the sixteenth century. Other provinces with ties to France – Alsace, Lorraine, Artois, Franche-Comté, and Roussillon – remained under the control of foreign powers.<sup>269</sup> The physical divisions of the land and the distribution of power and authority among kings, regional nobles, clergy, and people imposed a tenacious obstacle to the unity of authority in the French crown and resulted in vulnerabilities to the king's royal power.

First, regional customs and practices of authority remained present in France and continuously challenged the enforcement of centralized rule, which explains the ease at which

---

<sup>268</sup> Daniel Nexon has recently shown the inherent weakness of central authority in early modern states. See his book, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe : Religious conflict, dynastic empires, and international change*. Frederic Baumgartner and Arlette Jouanna emphasize the limitations of royal authority in early modern France. Baumgartner states: "For a royal institution, the Parlement had an amazingly strong sense of autonomy from the monarchy." Frederic J. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 5. For the pluralism inherent in early modern governments see: Fanny Cosandey and Robert Descimon, *L'absolutisme en France : Histoire et historiographie*.

<sup>269</sup> Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte*, p. 13.

groups of nobles could provoke rebellion and organize armies with impunity.<sup>270</sup> The nobility pictured themselves as the true heart of the metaphorical body politic as well as the intermediary between the king and *Tiers état*. The feudal system of service to an individual lord persisted and the *paysans* often felt closer ties to their local noble than to the king. Secondly, the deeply rooted Greco-Roman tradition of authority based on law and precedent had exercised a continuous influence throughout the Middle Ages and then saturated French culture during the Renaissance. Finally, the Reformation movement further complicated the religious tradition of authority. The religious tradition became problematic for French kings because the Church's authority originated from a more sustained and ancient tradition than the French monarchy. The king had to navigate this complex tradition of authority in order to construct a solid foundation of sanctified rule and increase the power of his image. However, managing the religious, ancient, and regional semiotic systems of authority was inherently problematic and opposing forces manipulated the same signs and traditions to undermine his authority. The civil and religious conflict in France exposed these divisive elements to which the nation became vulnerable and that displeased groups exploited to justify revolt.

The weakness of royal authority during the civil and religious wars in France offered a striking parallel with Saul's inability to capture David's band of rebels in Ancient Israel.

Episodes about the two kings appear in a variety of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century genres:

---

<sup>270</sup> Arlette Jouanna describes the situation perfectly: "Il est d'autres facteurs d'hétérogénéité dans le royaume. Chaque province, chaque ville, chaque corps a ses privilèges, c'est-à-dire, au sens étymologique du terme, ses lois privées, qui lui donnent une spécificité jalousement défendue. Bien des provinces sont administrées par des assemblées, les états provinciaux, où siègent les délégués des trois ordres qui constituent la société : le clergé, la noblesse et le tiers état. Dans les pays où règne le droit coutumier, en gros la moitié nord de la France, la justice est rendue selon des coutumes qui varient d'un endroit à l'autre, alors que dans les pays de droit écrit c'est le droit romain qui fait autorité. La pesanteur des hiérarchies creuse les distances sociales, malgré les liens clientèle, d'amitié et de sociabilité qui cimentent chaque communauté. Tous ces éléments font de la France un agrégat de particularismes qui rendent hasardeuse toute tentative de généralisation à l'échelle du royaume." *Le devoir de révolte*, p. 17.

poetry, pamphlets, apologies, treatises, and drama.<sup>271</sup> Catholic authors Du Bellay and Robert Garnier, Reformation sympathizers Clément Marot and Marguerite de Navarre, and Protestant dramatist Jean de La Taille felt a strong affinity with stories about the two kings, the characters who surrounded them, and the period of transition and civil war in Ancient Israel.<sup>272</sup> This period of biblical history offered political and historical parallels between two nations and God fearing peoples, ravaged by internal conflict and civil wars. They gleaned lessons from the biblical understanding of royal power and responsibility because the history of the reigns of Saul and David is the primary Old Testament illustration of just and unjust, divinely sanctioned or condemned rule.

Forces opposing royal authority subvert attempts to fashion royal power and betray an effort to undermine the foundation of their power. Tragedy posits that the weakness of central authority causes civil war and drives the tragic plot. In Des Masures's trilogy and in La Taille's plays, Saul constantly appears weak and unstable, and his power is illusory. In the Roman plays, Caesar, too, fears premonitions of his fall. The images of authority are negative and the Triumph shows their arrogance. The spectacle illustrates how a ruler overcompensates for his failures and then develops into a tyrant. The Nourrice in Garnier's tragedy *Porcie* (1568) indicates the true meaning of a triumph – to show a ruler's power over the people, not his victory over foreign nations. The Nourrice laments:

Tu nages dans le sang de tes pauvres enfans  
Que n'aguere on voyoit marcher si triomphans!  
Tu souffres, pauvre Rome, hélas! tu souffres ores  
Ce que tu fis souffrir à la cité des Mores,

---

<sup>271</sup> The lives of Saul and David comprise about one-fourth of the total number of tragedies produced during this period.

<sup>272</sup> Early modern authors found the core of the information about Saul and David from the Bible, but they also found some material in Josephus' *Antiquities*. The biblical histories of Saul and David are found in the two books of Samuel, 1 Kings, the two books of Chronicles, and many of the Psalms refer to various scenes from David's life. All biblical citations in English will come from the New International Version Bible unless otherwise noted.

A la belle Carthage, où tes fiers Empereurs  
 Despouillez de pitié commirent tant d'horreurs. (*Porcie*, 437-42)

In Garnier's next tragedy, his *Cornélie* (1574), Caesar returns in triumph after his victory over Pompey, a Roman citizen like himself and the spectators. Cicero captures the irony by describing Rome and her residents as the slaves who Caesar parades through the streets.<sup>273</sup> The Triumph mocks Rome because it is a victory over Roman people and not a foreign power.<sup>274</sup> Caesar's triumph, however, fails to gain power over the senators. These men react:

Nous le voyons terrible en un char élevé,  
 Trainer l'honneur vaincu de son peuple esclavé :  
 Ainsi Rome à Cesar donne un pouvoir supreme,  
 Et de Rome Cesar trionfe en Rome mesme. (*Cornélie*, 1097-1100)

The spectacle incites Cassie to ask Brutus if they should suffer this mockery and if it is just to kill Caesar. Brutus replies he will suffer no tyrant to rule in place of Rome's liberty.

## Tyranny

Tyranny was a common subject of discussion in the sixteenth century; it appeared in all genres from sermons to sonnets, and seemingly invaded every topic. In civil-war tragedies, a prince who failed to strengthen his image of authority, and who was met by growing opposition, often declined from monarch to tyrant. This image of royal authority in tragedy evolved during the civil war period and often mirrored its ever-changing perceptions of the monarchy. In late sixteenth-century France, the eccentric behavior and apparent weak pursuit of battle against heresy and rebellion by Henry III resulted in unstable relations between the king, the Catholic

---

<sup>273</sup> Garnier, *Porcie*, 755-75.

<sup>274</sup> McGowen, *Vision of Rome*, p. 276. "Cornélie paints Rome's degradation using a transposed version of a Roman triumph and here a visual subjugation is effected as she dwells on each detail appropriate to a victim. Rome becomes a being, head bowed and hands tied behind her as she walks in front of the glorious chariot of her victors (ironically, her own children) who, in the civil war, had left their fellow Romans dead..."



majority, and the Protestant minority. The Counter-Reformation in France sought to fill this lacuna of power and committed itself to the destruction of the Protestant heresies. The rising number of tragedies by Catholic authors contributed to the strength of this movement, helped to clarify its mission, and exposed the weakened state of the monarchy. Polemics against the king no longer imitated the general grievances against counselors that were common in the early period of wars. Moreover, many tragedians began to question the divine right to rule and labeled the king as a tyrant.

Given the political situation of the period, it is unsurprising that so many tragedies introduced such discussions. However, an abrupt change occurred in 1584 after the death of François d'Anjou as it placed the Protestant Henry of Navarre as heir presumptive to the French throne.<sup>275</sup> Threatening performances of subversion continued into the reign of Henry IV (1589-1610), surprising because this was a period of remarkable peace and stability in the kingdom. Even more surprising is the fact they continued into the reign of Louis XIII, which gives strong evidence to support a connection between the civil and religious wars of the late sixteenth century and the civil conflict that erupted in the 1620s and 1640s.<sup>276</sup> A connection will also be made in the conclusion of this dissertation between the sudden vogue of civil-war tragedies during the seventeenth century and those during the civil and religious wars of the sixteenth century.

The evolution in representations of tyranny appears in tragedy. For example, Saul's madness and his fall from power inspire sympathy in the tragedies published before 1572, but

---

<sup>275</sup> The death of François d'Anjou on June 10, 1584 was a critical event in the history of the Wars of Religion in France. He was next in line to be king and the catholic nobles who formed the alliance called the *Saint ligue* had rallied around him as their future hope. Before, they supported the strong monarchy to overcome the disorder. But now, the next in line for the throne was a protestant, Henri de Navarre. His death caused a major shift in the political situation, especially evident in the pamphlets and other literature.

<sup>276</sup> See Jouanna, *Le Devoir de révolte*, p. 222. A weak or young king continued to be the background for revolt. There were many fears that the troubles following the death of Henry II would be repeated with another after the death of Henry IV in 1610. Again, David's succession seems to reflect much of these times.

encourage condemnation after that year. This is seen in both Des Masures' *Tragédies saintes* (1562) and Jean de La Taille's *Saül le Furieux* (1571). The final scene of Des Masures's trilogy about David and Saul portrays a humble Saul, asking forgiveness and inspiring reconciliation with David. Furthermore, the *Argument* for La Taille's *Saül le Furieux* sets out a favorable portrayal of Saul and invites the reader's compassion and pity. La Taille recalls that God chose Saul at the request of the Israelites to be their king. God commanded Saul to destroy the town of Amalec, but he disobeyed and spared the best animals as well as the Amalec king, an action which La Taille hints was out of compassion on the part of Saul. The king lost divine favor and gradually slipped further into decadence and madness, far from his initial triumphs and honors. After he hears of Saul's death, David's final lines praise the unfortunate king: "Tu fus, ô Roy, si vaillant et si fort / Qu'autre que toy ne t'eust sceu mettre à mort."<sup>277</sup> Further proof of Saul's positive image during his kingship is seen in how the people continued to obey and follow Saul (except David's small band of persecuted followers), even when confronted by overwhelming Philistine armies.

These sympathetic visions of Saul the tyrant and the encouragement to remain loyal in the face of oppression will largely be abandoned after August, 1572. The St. Bartholomew's day massacre is justly seen as the most iconic event of the Wars of Religion because it destroyed any hope of reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics. This event frames the historical context that inspired the second play by Jean de La Taille, a tragedy that strongly contrasts the tragedy he published months before the massacre. In his sequel, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, it is no longer a question of doctrinal differences, and Saul no longer inspires pity. Saul is the personification of a tyrant and now the entire land and community suffer because of his sins and fall from grace. The discourse against tyranny focuses on the man and offers *ad hominem* attacks

---

<sup>277</sup> La Taille, *Saül le Furieux*, 1499-1500.

against Saul, replacing the attacks against foreigners or the royal court seen in the previous tragedy.

The chorus in Act II of *La Famine ou les Gabéonites* compares Saul to Pharaoh, a label for all tyrant kings who persecute the Chosen People. God struck down the first-born of Pharaoh's family, the chorus recalls, and caused plagues to signal the rejection of Pharaoh's kingship in contrast to the blessing on the Hebrew exiles. In comparison to this history, the Lord has now cast a famine on Israel, and Saul's family, the source of Israel's trouble, must bear the burden so that the land and people no longer suffer. Like Pharaoh, Saul's tyranny is a sign of rejection and gives divine sanctification for rebellion against his authority.

A similarly abrupt change appears in the Roman civil-war plays. In Grévin's *César* (1561), Calpurnia builds sympathy for Caesar by praising his deeds and character, evidence that the audience should trust Caesar, a suspected tyrant, instead of his adversary Brutus. Calpurnia argues that Caesar loves Rome more than himself, offering the audience a sign of humility. The chorus extends this sympathetic portrait and explains he is the great defender of the Republic.<sup>278</sup> Caesar is following Alexander, who rose from general to king to emperor, spreading Greek culture from one end of the earth to the other. Finally, after this continuous enhancement of Caesar's image, Caesar speaks. He claims to be the people's servant and to love Rome's honor more than his life. He says, "Ne m'en parlez donc plus et pensez que la vie / Ne m'est tant que l'honneur."<sup>279</sup> Caesar's assassins, on the other hand, are overcome by their passion and fury: "Et alors Casca, tout furieux, / La dague dans la main, la fureur dans les yeux."<sup>280</sup> The next lines mention murder, pride, and cruelty, marking Brutus and his companions as the tyrants. Caesar is the victim.

---

<sup>278</sup> Grévin, *César*, 249-50.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 792-93.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 907-8.

Garnier's *Porcie* (1568) shows many similarities to Grévin's *César*. Thematically, Garnier's tragedy supports a strong central government that maintains order. Porcie, the eponymous character of the tragedy, regrets Caesar's death even though he was a tyrant and even though she is Brutus's wife. The compassionate portrait of Caesar in *Porcie* recalls Grévin's sympathy for Henry II and his court, a royal court that was authoritarian and yet orderly and peaceful.<sup>281</sup> Garnier's tragedy argues that Caesar's assassins may have returned liberty to the Roman people, but it displays the consequences: retribution, disorder, and civil war.

In contrast is Garnier's later work, including *Cornélie* (1574), where the playwright recasts Caesar as ruthless and ambitious, the ultimate cause of a climate of hate and vengeance. Brutus and Cassius are now patriots and heroes of the people and nation.<sup>282</sup> Garnier's following tragedies, *Marc-Antoine* (1578) and *Antigone* (1580), confirm this conclusion. In these plays, Caesar and Creon are two tyrants who inspire no sympathy. Antigone, on the other hand, is the pious rebel who justly disobeys the ruler. These tragedies give evidence that Robert Garnier and other loyal monarchists had grown weary of Henry III and his capricious rule.

Despite Caesar's traditional image of power and renown, many thinkers and writers made him responsible for the fall of the Republic, and ultimately, for Rome's destruction. The tradition began with Lucan, the first-century Roman poet who feuded with Nero and had a well-known hatred for tyrants, including Caesar. Lucan expressed this in his *Pharsalia*, a description of the critical battle between Caesar and Pompey at Pharsalus in Greece. Lucan's *Pharsalia* was popular in France, especially during the civil wars, giving further credit to the conclusion that

<sup>281</sup> See Chapter 1 for a discussion of Grévin's support for Henry II in the prefatory material to the tragedy.

<sup>282</sup> "La 'conversion' de César a valeur tout à la fois de démonstration et d'avertissement : démonstration des risques du pouvoir d'un seul, qui tend à rapprocher la philosophie politique de Garnier du 'Contr'Un' de La Boétie, dont les 'monarchomaques' huguenots ne furent pas les uniques lecteurs ; avertissement lancé, par-dessus la tête des 'Malcontents' ou Ligueurs potentiels, au Prince et à ses conseillers. L'audace politique d'un tel théâtre, et non le deuil inconsolable de Catherine de Medicis, suffit à expliquer qu'il n'ait jamais été joué devant la cour de France." *Littérature française du XVIe siècle*, p. 360.

these later tragedies about Caesar were reflecting strong disapproval of the king and his court.<sup>283</sup>

Given the civil wars in France, this disapproval was interpreted into a right to revolt against a king whose actions betrayed tyranny.

### **Right to Revolt: Iconoclasm**

Civil-war tragedies help illuminate questions about a subject's right to revolt. All civil-war tragedies stage tyranny and all portray revolt against this oppression. Crucial for this study is to describe the manner in which the community perceives and then reacts to a tyrant on the throne. Theater further develops the question of sanctioned royal authority by staging the complex problem of loyalty to a questionable ruler. Tragedy narrows the audience's response to the problem by depreciating and vilifying the force which the audience is intended to recognize as the most nefarious – either the tyrant or the seditious group opposing him.

Many tragedies condition a negative and even a violent response from audiences in the portrayal of powerful yet flawed royal figures symbolized by Saul, Caesar, and Creon. The plays illustrate what Stephen Greenblatt has observed, namely that, "Power defines itself in relation to that which threatens it."<sup>284</sup> In tragedy, a tyrant upsets the established boundaries of power to such a degree that the ruler creates opposition to his rule and catalyzes subversive tendencies into outright revolt. This rebellious force either receives sanctification as a corrective movement or is condemned as a form of *lèse-majesté*, a direct and treasonable attack against the king. Tragedians supporting rebellion recast biblical and historical examples by molding and altering the stories to support arguments in the debate about the right to revolt.

---

<sup>283</sup> I am not currently aware of any studies that analyze Lucan's influence on sixteenth-century tragedy.

<sup>284</sup> Cited from Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton, *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*, p. 7.

A ruler's arrogance and pride are insufficient reasons to revolt; the king must transgress a specific boundary, and one of these possible boundary transgressions is discovered in the Ten Commandments. The Triumph not only reveals a tyrant, but it also resembles a ceremony of apotheosis, a form of idolatry and a transgression of the first and second commandments, causing a tyrant to be a heretic. The biblical representation of idolatry reveals a rich source of religious and political polemics, providing a germane model for analyzing sixteenth-century French tragedy. Idolatry is the worship of the physical, a form of adultery against the spiritual realm, which for Christians of the sixteenth century signifies direct revolt against God. The Bible explicitly links idolatry and adultery when describing the covenant relationship, one that Christian Scriptures describe as the marriage of God and the Chosen People. Both Protestant and Catholic French authors returned to these biblical sources to express their views of the covenant between the king and God, an agreement that reflects the relationship between the people and king.

Idolatry is a fertile topic that applies to themes of hubris, vanity, tyranny, and excessive passion, all forms of self-worship. These categories of idol and image worship violate the Judeo-Christian covenant and are therefore considered adultery. The biblical metaphor of Israel as the "bride of God" is the primary source of conceptions and definitions of marriage, adultery, and idolatry. The metaphor combines all monotheistic subjects into one national body. This national body forms a community of believers that are married to God by the covenant between God and His people. Exodus 20 states, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." (Exodus 20:2) After this statement, the passage inaugurates the marriage contract between Yahweh and Israel: "You shall have no other gods before me." The second commandment bonds idolatry to adultery, prohibiting idol worship, the consequence

for which is punishment to the third and fourth generation. The passionate expression of this warning foreshadows the seemingly excessive nature of chastening, misery, and suffering meted out on the Holy people, and by extension, on sixteenth-century France.

Some sixteenth-century tragedies formulate attacks against tyranny, associating this transgression with heresy. They also make direct accusations against princes and kings who attempt to be worshipped like a god, or to attain apotheosis and compete with God. In the Old Testament book of Samuel, the prophet explains to Saul that, “rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.” (1 Samuel 15:23) There is a symbolic connection between idolatry and tyranny when the sovereign has established himself as an icon and desires to create a new theocracy based on the worship of his person. Tania Van Hemelryck has worked on this important connection in sixteenth-century French literature and concludes: “En élaborant une idole, l’idolâtre se substitue au Créateur, tandis qu’en la façonnant à son image, il se divinise à travers sa propre représentation...l’idole devient le double métaphorique du tyran.”<sup>285</sup> Therefore, the political-theological system of the Old Testament applies to sixteenth-century tragedies especially through the system illustrated in the Book of Judges where God is the King and lawgiver over idol-worshipping and adulterous Israel. The king must accept this hierarchy, or like Saul, lose his sanctified right to rule.

Sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies also help to uncover the connection between tyranny and idolatry and how contemporary authors used it to construct attacks against an unpopular king. In Des Masures’ *David combattant* (1562), Satan links faith and covenant, idolatry and heresy. Satan, personifying idolatry and heresy, explains how he converts God’s people into his own vassals, “De perdre de son coeur l’espérance et la foi / Et laissant de son

---

<sup>285</sup> Tania Van Hemelryck, “L’idole dans la littérature française,” p.134.

Dieu l'ordonnance et la loi, / Faut qu'il adore un jour mes idoles de fonte."<sup>286</sup> Satan defines his followers:

... rancune et envie,  
Avarice, déloyauté.  
Paillardise, orgueil, cruauté,  
Idolâtrie en toute forme  
Et toute autre infamie énorme,  
En quoi seul consiste mon règne. (*David combattant*, 1410-15)

Satan is the Enemy, the first Rebel according to Christian scriptures. As Saul becomes more and more tied to Satan and his cohort in Des Masures' tragedies, David's rebellion gains strength and legitimacy. However, in this tragedy, the link remains most clear between Satan and Saul's royal advisor, Doeg, suggesting Des Masures was unwilling to directly accuse and condemn the king.

The tragedy *David combattant* also contains the earliest reference to apotheosis in a civil-war tragedy. In this tragedy, Goliath desires to be a god. Goliath claims:

Non, il n'est point de dieu qui s'oppose à ma rage...  
Pour dieu vais je adorant les forces de mes mains  
Par lesquelles malgré les dieux et les humains  
Me ferai voir au ciel. (*David combattant*, 998-1003)

Goliath emphasizes his superior physical strength and size and believes he is invincible. A desire for apotheosis leads to tyranny. Des Masures transfers Goliath's role to Saul in the second play, and by associating the king with the Philistine heretic, the play marks Saul for his fated destruction, while showing sympathy for that fate.

A similar speech is seen in *Saül le Furieux*, where Saul's boast to raise himself to the heavens resembles Goliath's claim in *David combattant*. Saul exclaims:

Je veux monter au ciel, que mon char on attelle,  
Et comme les Geants entassants monts sur monts,  
Je feray trebuscher les Anges et Daemons,

---

<sup>286</sup> Des Masures, *David combattant*, 841-43.



Et seray Roy des Cieux, puis que j'ay mis en fuite  
 Mes ennemis, dont j'ay la semence estruite. (*Saül le Furieux*, 254-58)

The speech uncovers Saul's character: his arrogance, his desire for apotheosis, and his unfaithfulness to the first and second commandments. Saul falls deeper into apostasy after this discourse by consulting a necromancer, a forbidden act, in order to consult the deceased prophet, Samuel. Saul again breaks the second commandment and groups God with other spiritual elements. Saul says, "Les Prophetes et DIEU, le Ciel, la Terre, et l'Air, / Conjurants contre moy, je t'ay fait appeller."<sup>287</sup> Saul's apparent polytheism and his willingness to disobey the covenant to achieve personal glory voids God's protection of his crown and family, yet does not give a right to harm the person of the king, a treasonous action David continuously avoids because he refuses to lay hands on the anointed king.

This link between tyranny and idolatry also appears in non-biblical tragedies. In Garnier's *Antigone* (1580), Creon warns his subjects to beware the wrath and punishment of a king. Then, he swears by his scepter and crown to force obedience, actions that brand him as an idolater who places the source of his power in these objects instead of in God.<sup>288</sup> A similar displacement of authority is seen in the *Thébaïde* (1584). Eteocles betrays his descent into tyranny because his crown has made him drunk on power. He claims that anyone who wants to be happy should be a king because they can "graver ses lois dans le coeur du commun / Obéissant à nul, obéi d'un chacun."<sup>289</sup> He obeys no laws or gods, yet he compels his subjects to obey. He is in love with the power the scepter gives him and worships it like an idol. He describes the joy and power the scepter gives him and repeats the word "sceptre" throughout his

<sup>287</sup> La Taille, *Saül le Furieux*, 749-50.

<sup>288</sup> Garnier, *Antigone*, 173-74.

<sup>289</sup> Robelin, *Thébaïde*, 629-30.

monologue. “Le sceptre,” he says, “a tout pouvoir sur le pouvoir du monde.”<sup>290</sup> This *epanaphora*, the repetition of words or emotions in successive lines or within the phrase, aids the Renaissance practice of *amplificatio* to emphasize Eteocles’ obsession. Finally, Eteocles concludes, “Bref, nous sommes des Dieux.”<sup>291</sup> A sixteenth-century audience would understand the repercussions of this statement and that the declaration breaks the first and second commandments.

Eteocles’ mother Jocaste understands, too. Jocaste arrives after this self-condemning monologue and reminds her son that he promised to share the throne with his brother. He refuses to obey another prince or to call himself equal with anyone. Eteocles tells his mother, “Non Madame, d’un Roi le sceptre au lieu ressemble / Qui ne se peut tenir de deux corps tout ensemble.”<sup>292</sup> A king shares power with no one, not with God, not with the people, and not with his brother. “Non, je veux être Roi seul ou, rien.”<sup>293</sup> Jocaste tries to point out his error and asks, “Quel plaisir aurez-vous en telle dignité, / ternie des efforts d’une infidélité?”<sup>294</sup> Here Jocasta links infidelity, or adultery, and the violation of his oath as king. Eteocles insists he is not betraying his brother’s rights nor any laws because the king decides what is just, not the gods.

Like his brother, Polynices raises himself to the level of the gods. He extols Jupiter and the manner in which this god commands. He desires that the people fear and obey his rule like the king of the gods. Nothing is more desirable than the power to kill women and children, burn temples and houses, and see a crown upon your head. The two brothers encounter each other in battle outside the city and both die, proving their transgressions. However, the play further develops the vision of tyranny in addition to their heresy. Creon steps to the throne after the

---

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 640.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 721.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 771-72.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 774.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 789-90.

brothers are dead, is seduced by the power, and falls into tyranny. Antigone, the personification of piety, defies her uncle's commands.<sup>295</sup> She gives a poetic description of Creon's tyranny, contrasting his personal desires and commands with the justice of the gods.

Créon le veut? privé donc vous serez, mon frère,  
 Puisque Créon le veut, de l'honneur mortuaire?  
 Puisque Créon le veut, mon frère, vous aurez  
 Pour sépulcre les flancs des bêtes des forêts?  
 Hé, bons Dieux, est-ce vous, royale géniture,  
 Que doivent les Thébains laisser sans sépulture?  
 Est-ce de vous, mon frère, hélas! est-ce de vous  
 Que doivent en vos champs se repaître les loups?  
 Créon, quel juge es-tu? Hé, quelle est ta justice,  
 Qui injuste te rend punissant l'injustice? (*Thébaïde*, 2165-74)

Following this soliloquy Antigone exits the stage to bury her brother in defiance of the king. Roles reverse; Antigone becomes the judge and denounces Creon's proclamation. By this action she raises the authority of the people over the king. The chorus warns, "Ainsi, bien que sanglant, / Thèbes est triomphante."<sup>296</sup> The people already triumphed over the tyrant brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, now they will defy Creon, and cleanse this pollution of tyranny and idolatry from the land.

### **Pollution and Iconoclasm**

The symbolical and the historical merge in civil-war tragedy. Pollution is a poison to the body politic, a poison that must be purged. During the civil and religious wars, this purging action translated to the cleansing of icons from the community. Iconoclasm became not only a *topos* in the religious debate, but also a political ideology, and at times, a polemic used to attack the reputation of enemy groups, doctrines, and leaders. The Reformation movement extended the

<sup>295</sup> Garnier named his tragedy about the Greek heroine, *Antigone ou la piété*.

<sup>296</sup> Robelin, *Thébaïde*, 2225-26.

traditional definition of iconoclasm to include hagiography and the Mass. Protestant reformers labeled images used in Church ceremony and religious instruction as a direct violation of the second commandment. Not only Protestants, but also many Catholics perceived the applicability of this effective *topos* in order to spur reform in the Church. Idolatry was heresy which implied rebellion against God. When a heresy such as idolatry caused a group of God's people to rebel, it was the duty of the faithful to combat and eradicate the rebellious group. This doctrine provided the source of much conflict during the unceasing civil wars in sixteenth-century France because both Protestants and Catholics often considered themselves as warriors in a divinely sanctioned Crusade against subversive elements undermining social order.

Some civil-war tragedies identify the tyrant as pollution, poison, or heresy – impurity the people must cleanse from the body politic. In Grévin's *César*, Brutus legitimates tyrannicide, and therefore regicide, calling Caesar the poison corrupting the Republic.<sup>297</sup> However, other tragedies published before 1572 avoid associating the vocabulary of pollution or poison with the king. For example, Des Masures uses this language to describe the enemy Philistines. Abner, Saul's military general, says, "Sire, voici celui par qui Dieu a voulu / Montrer au Philistin, qui son nom a pollué / Par blasphème outrageux, sa puissance plus forte."<sup>298</sup> Then, Abner extends this analogy to link pollution with idolatry: "Ton peuple tu gardas lorsque tâchait l'abattre / Par tous outrages durs Egypte l'idolâtre."<sup>299</sup> Abner's discourse implies a call for iconoclasm from the audience because the language suggests the need to cleanse and purify the community.

Des Masures also uses the vocabulary of pollution, but he employs it in discourse to condemn the royal court. This vocabulary identifies the play's target, not as the king, but as the corrupting influence of the royal advisors. In *David triomphant*, he says, "En cour sont poisons

---

<sup>297</sup> Grévin, *César*, 1022.

<sup>298</sup> Des Masures, *David combattant*, 1775-77.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 1023-24.

dangereuses.”<sup>300</sup> Similar to Iago in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, the courtiers in Des Masures’ tragedies deceive the king and citizens, causing the discord ruining the kingdom. In this case, Saul’s deceptive courtiers destroy the royal family and weaken the state. David recognizes this danger and the king’s ignorance of it. David also perceives his mission to distance himself and his followers from this contagion so that a member of the community body will remain uninfected and healthy. David sees that, “Ains obstiné en mal persévère la vie / Toujours doit la santé fuir la région / Qui peut infecter de sa contagion.”<sup>301</sup> If the poison remains, causing healthy members – David and his followers – to flee the land, then the king or God must eradicate the pollution to save the health of the kingdom. Des Masures emphasizes in these passages about pollution and poison that David’s mission is to flee from the corruption; his mission is not active revolt to cleanse the infection from the royal court.

La Taille’s *Saül le Furieux* also describes the Philistines as the pollution and poison to the community body instead of the king, Saul. Saul recognizes that the forthcoming and crucial battle will pit him against the invading Infidel, not against David’s small band of exiles. Saul perceives that, “Nous vainqueurs serions nous vaincus des Infideles, / Vaincus autant de fois qu’ils ont esté rebelles? / Ne vit on pas leurs corps infecter les chemins.”<sup>302</sup> In addition to identifying the Philistines as the infecting poison, Saul’s discourse labels them as rebels. Philistines, an archetype of the foreign barbarian (a possible allusion to the Spanish?), and deceitful courtiers absorb the brunt of attacks in the early period of these civil-war tragedies, contrasting the targets in later plays. For example, the primary threat to community health shifts to a different character La Taille’s second play *La Famine ou les Gabéonites* (1573).

---

<sup>300</sup> Des Masures, *David triomphant*, 1748.

<sup>301</sup> Des Masures, *David combattant*, 1004-06.

<sup>302</sup> La Taille, *Saül le Furieux*, 87-89.

David highlights the critical question of La Taille's sequel, that is, why are there a famine and plague and what is the solution? David asks his army commander: "Quel espoir et moyen, quell' ayde et medecine / Trouverons nous, Joabe, à chasser la famine?"<sup>303</sup> The play's context echoes the civil and religious wars in France – misery and suffering caused by civil conflict and turmoil. David and Joab discover that Saul's massacre of the Gabeonites has caused divine wrath in the form of the famine; therefore, they ask these people how to redeem this sin. The Gabeonites inform David the only way to atone for the massacre of their people is to massacre the massacres. They argue:

O Sire vous sçavez qu'il n'y a rien plus doux  
Que la vengeance avoir : vengeance qui est cause  
Qu'un mourir gracieux les paupieres nous clause,  
Quand nous sommes vangez. (*La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 594-97)

The answer: cleanse the land by purging Saul's family, the pollution. The response has strong echoes of the St Bartholomew Day tragedy and suggests the answer to this massacre is the sacrifice of the ruling Valois family, the family that ordered the massacres. Nevertheless, David objects that Saul is guilty and his family is innocent. A Gabeonite Prince and representative of his people disagrees that Saul's family is innocent and supports his conclusion with the Old Testament proverb that blood must repay blood (Genesis 9:6). The tragedy highlights the genetic stain of this poison. Therefore, the sole method to ensure the infection spreads no further is to efface the cursed family from the nation.

In this tragedy, the vocabulary of purging and cleansing denotes violence and incites revenge, similar to the actions incited by iconoclasm. The sacrifice of Saul's children and grandchildren will "purgent en ce lieu là de leur père les crimes."<sup>304</sup> Yet this is not simply to

---

<sup>303</sup> La Taille, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 185-86.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 666.

create a scapegoat, because it is “non pour sacrifier / Mais las, à celle fin de les crucifier.”<sup>305</sup> This vocabulary of crucifixion retains a redemptive quality of self-sacrifice, and at the conclusion of the play, these children will joyfully accept their role. The famine and sacrifice is to teach that God’s righteous wrath will correct the evil committed by a tyrant. The didactic intention of the tragedy is revealed in Joab’s remark that the children’s death is, “Pour enseigner que Dieu punit de telle sorte / Le Tyran, que son sang, voire apres la mort, porte / La peine paternelle.”<sup>306</sup> Tyrannicide, and therefore regicide, is a righteously mandated response to a heretic prince.

Other post-St. Bartholomew Day tragedies associate pollution or poison with an individual character flaw. Ambition, for example, creates a tyrant because it poisons an otherwise able ruler such as Caesar. In the tragedy, *Cornélie* (1574), Cornélie observes, “Mechante Ambition, des courages plus hauts / Poison enraciné, tu nous trames ces maux! / Tu renverses nos loix.”<sup>307</sup> The impurity (Tyranny) violates the laws of the Republic and should be punished like other lawbreaking. Similarly, in the *Thébaïde* (1584), poison is linked to the scepter and crown, ambition’s seductive tools. Antigone believes these objects, or icons, are the source of tyranny, itself the cause of deceit, plague, and cruelty. She observes:

Qu’entre tous les malheurs, exécration Pandore,  
Desquels traîtreusement ta détestable main  
Jadis envenima tout notre genre humain,  
Il n’y avait poison ni peste plus cruelle,  
Que le hautain désir du sceptre qui pointelle  
Les folâtres esprits... (*Thébaïde*, 1828-33)

In Antigone’s discourse, Pandora is the source of all evil, a role similar to Satan in the Genesis accounts of the first men and women, and like Satan, she is the serpent who poisons the scepter, a secular metonymy for sanctioned authority. This association of poison and violation of secular

---

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 707-08.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 739-41.

<sup>307</sup> Garnier, *Cornélie*, 23-25.

law reveals the combination of biblical and secular support for the right to revolt in sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies where the lexicon to expose the king's law-breaking mirrors the phraseology used to determine covenant violations outlined in the first and second commandments of Old Testament Law.

### **The Law**

For both rebels and regicides, the Law (political, religious, social) was a powerful ally. To seek legitimacy for rebellion, rebels had to dispute the treasonous image of their actions. Biblical support for revolt remained contestable because passages in Christian scriptures condemned rebellion against secular authority.<sup>308</sup> Over the course of civil conflict in France, Huguenot and Calvinist political thought became more and more eclectic as polemicists appropriated Greek and Roman classics, for example, Aristotle and Lucan, and even medieval scholastic sources to buttress their position. Harro Höpfl has studied these patterns in Calvinist polemics and observed that during the French wars of religion, "Argument from first principles of natural reason and natural law; induction from experience, prudence, and history; and the use of scripture as a source of historical exempla rather than doctrine: these together compose the 'political science' (*scientia gubernatoria*) of all denominations."<sup>309</sup> This eclectic approach to supporting revolt appears in civil-war tragedy where an author expands the stage-illusion and posits a tragedy as an *exemplum* for events in France.

In civil-war tragedies, for example, Brutus argues he is following his duty to the Republic by killing Caesar, a usurper and destroyer of ancient rights and laws. David justifies his continued revolt against Saul because he alone has received divine sanctification as leader of

---

<sup>308</sup> See Chapter 1 for a discussion of these passages in scriptures.

<sup>309</sup> Harro M. Höpfl, "The Ideal of *Arisocratia Politiae Vicina* in the Calvinist Political Tradition" in *Calvin and His Influence*, p. 58.



God's Chosen People. Saul's madness and the impotent pursuit of his adversary, David, are posited as strong evidence in support of his loss of grace. These rhetorical patterns illustrate the manner in which anti-royal elements argued from a position of religious authority as restorers of the gospel, and how rebelling nobles appropriated concrete arguments to support revolt against the king. Like Brutus, they positioned themselves as re-establishers of the people's ancient rights. Meanwhile, the king and his advisors systematically qualified all revolt as disobedience, treason, and betrayal of the rightful sovereignty of the crown.

The polemical focus against the Guise family, Catherine de Medici, Charles IX, and Henry III attempted to confirm these powerful figures were guilty of illegality according to the "ancient laws" or customs of France. Huguenots represented themselves as the defenders of the nation's laws and of the people. The same arguments and polemics appear in the Low Countries during that region's long revolt against Catholic Spain. The rebels' actions defended ancient rights, liberties, and privileges of the towns and provinces. Resistance to tyranny was justified as the natural law or natural right of communities for self-defense. Theodore de Bèze, succeeding Calvin's leadership in Geneva, invoked this natural law in the *Droit des magistrats* (1574). These ideals of covenants and contracts were central metaphors in all resistance literature. A common expression declared that there can be a people without a king, but no king without a people. The people existed *a priori* kingship; therefore, the people established the sovereign and the law. The people were supreme – *salus populi suprema lex*. In the well-known *Franco-Gallia*, François Hotman, the prolific Huguenot polemicist, described examples of various peoples that illustrated conditional authority, *mutua obligatio*.<sup>310</sup> These nations instituted kingship along with specific laws and institutions in order to police the whole – including royal authority.

---

<sup>310</sup> See Myriam Yardeni, "Hotman et l'essor de l'histoire propagande à l'époque des guerres de religion" in *Claude Le Jeune et son temps en France*, pp. 377-85.

Tragedy illustrates this rising secular approach to resistance theory during the civil wars. In Grévin's *César*, Brutus's tirade against Caesar develops a germane model in civil-war tragedies for casting a prince as a tyrant, an enemy of the people and of the law, then showing a just cause to kill the ruler. Brutus and his companions apply this model and murder Caesar. Then after the assassination, Brutus justifies their treason:

Le tyran est tué, la liberté remise,  
 Et Rome a regagné sa première franchise.  
 Ce Tyran, ce César, ennemi du Sénat,  
 Oppresseur du pays, qui de son Consulat  
 Avait fait héritage, et de la République  
 Une commune vente en sa seule pratique,  
 Ce bourreau d'innocents, ruine de nos lois,  
 La terreur des Romains et le poison des droits,  
 Ambitieux d'honneur, qui montrant son envie  
 S'était fait appeler Père de la Patrie  
 Et Consul à jamais, à jamais Dictateur,  
 Et pour comble de tout, du surnom d'Empereur;  
 Il est mort, ce méchant, qui décelant sa rage  
 Se fit impudemment élever une image  
 Entre les Rois ; aussi il a eu le loyer  
 Par une même main qu'eut Tarquin le dernier. (*César*, 1015-30)

Brutus gives a virtuoso performance to convince the people they should confirm the justness of his cause. The passage forms a chiasmus at the center of which stands the rights and laws Brutus claims to be his foundation. He begins by naming the tyrant and setting him in opposition to the Senate, Republic, Laws, and finally, all Romans. The vocabulary Brutus employs in this rhetoric separates Caesar from the community. Brutus begins by contrasting Caesar, the individual and tyrant, from the unified community. His vocabulary: Republic, Senate, Country, all indicate the body politic, composed of individuals yet working in harmony. Caesar has upset this harmony and ruined laws (*ruine de nos lois*) and poisoned their rights (*le poison des droits*). Then, Brutus juxtaposes this vocabulary of unified community with the singular nouns: Père, Consul,

---

Dictateur, Empereur, meaning Caesar has continuously separated himself from the body politic in order to be its Emperor. Caesar has begun innocuously as a hero and father of the people, then as Consul, but Emperor is a name hated by all true Romans due to their bitter experience with the Tarquins, the foreign tyrants who first ruled over Rome. By aspiring to this title, Caesar has associated himself with these ancient tyrants, and no longer may be called Roman.

Arguments to restore ancient rights and liberties strengthen legitimacy for revolt. After Brutus's discourse about law, liberty, and tyranny, Cassius shouts to the people, "Reprendre maintenant tous vos droits anciens." The debate over law-sanctified revolt appears in all tragedies about both Saul and Caesar. In Garnier's *Porcie*, Pompey and his allies die for liberty while combatting tyranny. Pompey died, "en volonté / De nous restituer l'antique liberté."<sup>311</sup> And in the *Tragedie nouvelle appelée Pompée*, Pompey claims to have authority on his side. He says, "Avec nous estoit l'autorité Romaine: / Car de forts Senateurs nostre armee estoit pleine."<sup>312</sup> They are not rebels, but patriots, "Deffendant la patrie, et Saincte liberté."<sup>313</sup> The law is supreme, and Pompey's faction represents it. The following rhyme demonstrates the king and the law are inseparable: "Quiconques veut sogneux donner conseil au Roy, / Doibt libre regarder ce que requiert la Loy."<sup>314</sup> The king who violates the law betrays the kingdom.

Antigone's defiance of Creon is the conflict driving the play in Garnier's *Antigone ou la piété* (1580). This rebellion in the name of piety, or faithfulness, challenges Creon's faithlessness as sovereign and questions whether he exceeds the limits of legitimate royal power. The civil war between Antigone's brothers remains in a shadowy background, and the causes of their civil war

---

<sup>311</sup> Garnier, *Porcie*, 506-07.

<sup>312</sup> Anonymous, *Tragédie nouvelle appelée Pompée*, 55-56.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>314</sup> Italics are my emphasis. *Ibid.*, 287-88.

seem irrelevant to the plot's development. Meanwhile, the debate about the laws of the Republic and the right to revolt against legitimate power constructs the crisis for the tragedy.

### **Duty to Revolt**

These arguments often affirm an obligation to revolt because faithful subjects have a duty to preserve the laws of the land, both secular and biblical. These higher laws require absolute fidelity even if that loyalty opposes the people to the king. The Union of Protestant nobles that formed before the attack on Amboise in 1560 was the first of many associations among nobles with the intention to revolt to support authority, not against it. Condé, the Union's leader, had three documents written in April 1562: the *Déclaration*, *Protestation*, and *Traité d'Association*.<sup>315</sup> Subsequent rebel associations recycled these models to outline the legitimacy of their revolt much like tragedians recycled plots. Condé asserted the Union was an association of family, friends, and servants (ally nobles) against the illegal Triumvirat of François de Guise, Anne de Montmorency, and Jacques de Saint-André. In the *Déclaration*, Condé claimed to be acting “comme Prince du Sang, et à qui appartient de droit naturel de défendre les sujets du Roi contre ceux qui voudraient les opprimer par force et violence.” They had a duty to the kingdom to revolt against the usurpers of power.

The *Tragédies saintes* (1562) by Des Masures stages the same duty to revolt that was elaborated in Condé's apologetics for the Amboise attack. The duty focuses on resistance against corrupting advisors, and is sustained by a continued profession of loyalty to the king. The tragedies develop arguments that revolt against the manipulators of royal power when the *patrie*

---

<sup>315</sup> The complete title of the *Traité* by Condé's alliance uncovers their desire to be viewed as defenders of liberty instead of rebels. The title is “Traite d'Association faite par Monseigneur le Prince de Conde avec les Princes, Chevaliers de l'Ordre, Seigneurs, Capitaines, Gentilshommes, et autres de tous etats qui sont entrés, ou entreront ci-apres, en ladite Association, pour maintenir l'honneur de Dieu, le repos de ce Royaume, et l'etat et la liberte du roi sous le gouvernement de la Reine sa mere.”

is in danger is not only a right, but also a duty.<sup>316</sup> The life of David provided an inspiring biblical example for Protestants to show they were not in rebellion against the king; they were fighting to uphold his power. David, as a *prince du sang* like Condé, could legitimate his opposition to Saul in defense of the kingdom.

In addition to the argument of corruption and usurpation, persecution is also treason and legitimate rebellion is approved when a prince attacks his subjects. In Des Masures' tragedies, David defends his rebellion because "Je suis à tort de Saül poursuivi."<sup>317</sup> Yet David still blames the corrupting influence of courtiers and not Saul for the persecution. Saul's blindness makes him fail to see the pit into which his counselors are leading him. The courtiers' actions make them traitors to the king and nation:

L'homme innocent opprimé,  
Par leur fausse entremise  
Ont trahison commise  
Même encontre le roi  
Auquel faussant la foi  
Par leur langue traîtresse. (*David fugitif*, 714-19)

David and his men have a duty to the king and subjects to fight against this treason. By deceiving the king, these traitors have compromised the king's authority and his sovereignty. The tragedies juxtapose these traitors and David to show the corrupting advisors are in revolt against the kingdom and David's resistance is just.

Like Des Masures, Grévin published his tragedy *César* after the Affaire d'Amboise, the initial revolt by an organized Protestant army. In this tragedy, Brutus evokes his duty to revolt, his duty to the people, and his duty to his family heritage as a prince of Rome. Brutus claims,

---

<sup>316</sup> Some Protestants felt the need to articulate the justification for revolt during the Affaire d'Amboise and composed the "Reponse Chretienne et Defensive..." They declared, "Mais la Religion de Dieu, et toutes Lois recues entre les hommes, non seulement excusent, ains commandent au sujet charger les armes, pour la defense de son naturel Prince, quand il est opprimé, pour la conservation de la Loi, et pour la garde du Pays."

<sup>317</sup> Des Masures, *David triomphant*, 59.

“Le vouloir qu’*ai* reçu de ma première *race*, / Pour un jour étouffer cette royale *audace*.”<sup>318</sup> The nobles must defend the people. If needed, they must defend the people against a ruler. The antithesis of *race/audace* contrasts Brutus’ support for republicanism and Caesar’s ambition to royalty. His “noblesse et vertu de ton antique race” gives him legitimacy to take action against a prince.<sup>319</sup> This tradition and history support Brutus and he uses it to show solid precedent for his actions. Brutus also refers to the Tarquins to build this historical precedent. Their tyrannical Empire over the early Roman Republic symbolizes the eternal right to destroy nascent forms of tyranny. He has made an oath to defend Rome and Brutus calls himself:

Ennemie du nom de ce Tyran cruel.  
 Et quand on parlera de César et de Rome,  
 Qu’on se souvienne aussi qu’il a été un homme,  
 Un Brute, le vengeur de toute cruauté,  
 Qui aura d’un seul coup gagné liberté.  
 Quand on dira, César fut maître de l’Empire,  
 Qu’on dise quant et quant, Brute le sut occire.  
 Quand on dira, César fut premier Empereur,  
 Qu’on dise quant et quant, Brute en fut le vengeur. (*César*, 383-92)

The *Quand* and *Qu’on* repartee in this formula shows that a Brutus is always the answer to a Caesar. A Caesar destroys the laws; Brutus will always protect them. The juxtaposition of Caesar and Brutus in this diatribe clarifies their divisive positions: Empire and Republic. Similar to the two previous juxtapositions of David and the traitorous royal advisors, and Condé and the Triumvirate, now Brutus is defending the law and the ruler (Caesar) is rebelling against the people. Brutus and his regicides are protecting the kingdom.

Brutus’ duty to his country and to the laws of the Republic supersedes all: love for Caesar, for his children, father, and wife. Brutus vows:

---

<sup>318</sup> My emphasis. Grévin, *César*, 351-52.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

Je l'aime chèrement, je l'aime, mais le droit  
 Qu'on doit à son païs, qu'à sa naissance on doit,  
 Toute autre amour surmonte : et plus qu'enfant, que père,  
 Que femme, que mary, nostre patrie est chère. (*César*, 1125-28)

Brutus owes allegiance to his noble blood, a covenant that demands he remain faithful to the law, not to his friend Caesar.<sup>320</sup> The unclear distinction between a king and a dictator is problematic in tragedy. Brutus struggles with this dilemma, yet he perceives that Caesar's wars and ambition have caused ruin, plague, and famine on the people and that makes him an enemy of the people. Brutus concludes that subjects no longer owe loyalty to the king if he has become an enemy of the people. It is a duty to fight him.

Caesar again must take the role of tyrant in the *Tragédie nouvelle appelée Pompée*. In this tragedy, it is Pompey's duty to fight against Caesar because he has become a dictator, and liberty is impossible when tyrants rule. Pompey says, "Par la mort des Tyrans serez hors de souci."<sup>321</sup> Pompey adds that violating the Republic's laws is Caesar's greatest crime: "Il [Caesar] veut contre les loix avoir son avantage."<sup>322</sup> Caesar's lawbreaking legitimates Pompey's declaration of war and confirms his decision to continue the civil conflict. Pompey's ambition remains absent from the tragedy.

---

<sup>320</sup> The sentiment recalls Shakespeare's Brutus:

... If then that friend demand  
 why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer:  
 --Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved  
 Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living and  
 die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live  
 all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him;  
 as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was  
 valiant, I honour him: but, as he was ambitious, I  
 slew him. (*The Life and Death of Caesar*, Act III Scene 2)

<sup>321</sup> *Tragédie nouvelle appelée Pompée*, 634.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 643.

In the tragedy, a group of young girls discovers the body of Pompey “the Great” floating in the sea near a beach in Egypt. Corneille (Cornelia), his wife, laments his death and rhymes Pompée with *trompée*.<sup>323</sup> Pompey’s assassination by Caesar’s Egyptian sycophants was cowardly and treasonous and Corneille advises the remaining friends:

Fuyons, femmes, fuyons leur terre, et cruauté  
 Leur Roy, et leur conseil, et leur desloyauté.  
 Allons veoir ce corps mort. C’est mon mari ce corps:  
 Ce corps, vostre Seigneur, Roy tu me fais ces tors.  
 (*Tragédie nouvelle appelée Pompée*, 933-36)

Following this command, the chorus gives a homily about infidelity, connecting the concepts of treason and infidelity. Pompey’s assassination is both treasonous and unfaithful because his death is more significant than the murder of one Senator; Pompey’s corpse symbolizes a critical blow to the body politic.

### **King’s Two Bodies and *Lèse-majesté***

This argumentation reveals a strong connection to the king’s two bodies’ theory of royal power.<sup>324</sup> Nobles have a duty to fight to save the kingdom if the king himself is corrupted or incapacitated because the king’s individual, physical body is just a mortal shell – the body politic is eternal. However, the reverse is also true; regicide can destroy not only the tyrant, but also the kingdom. The intimate connection between the king and the land reveals the dangerous consequences of regicide.

Kantorowicz discusses this critical idea in his seminal work, *The King’s Two Bodies*, where he explains the interesting combination of theology and politics that creates the medieval

---

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 899-900.

<sup>324</sup> See Kantorowicz’s seminal work on the subject, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*.



view of kingship and its widespread use in the sixteenth century in England and France. The king has both a physical, mortal body, and a body politic that represents the immortal body of the kingdom, symbolized by the crown and scepter, and sanctified by God. This concept of the two bodies was displayed during French royal funerals. A royal funeral illustrates the death of the king's physical body, while his second body, the "corps politique" or "corps mystique," survives in his successor's reign.<sup>325</sup> This concept is revealed in the exclamation after the immediate death of a king: *Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!* Therefore, when rebels argue that they revolt against the king for the king, they refer to the king as the continuity and incarnation of the body politic. Nevertheless, those arguing against revolt explain that rebelling against a king becomes not only rebellion against God, but also a form of suicide since all the king's subjects are members of this body politic. To counter this statement, the prince is literally and figuratively the head of state, and when this head is diseased, then so are the land and the community. This verbal sparring reveals the complexity of the problem of revolt in sixteenth-century France.

It would be an error to consider this comparison of the two bodies as a simple rhetorical figure; it was a way of conceptualizing the socio-political order, especially for the relationship between king and subjects. The kingdom remains incomplete and dysfunctional without harmony among members of the body: the king, nobles, priests, and people. Three common terms were also used in conjunction with the two bodies: *couronne*, *patrie*, and *nation*. François d'Alençon illustrated many of these notions in the *Briève Remonstrance à la Noblesse de France* (1575). In this apology, he justified the taking up of arms and carefully distinguished his revolt as

---

<sup>325</sup> "Le mot corps, dans l'expression corps politique ou corps mystique, avait un sens juridique (que l'on retrouve dans corporation), et non biologique; néanmoins, l'analogie entre les deux corps du roi rendait naturel, pour qualifier le second, l'emploi de la métaphore organique, c'est-à-dire la comparaison de l'ensemble de la société politique ordonnée avec un corps humain." Jouanna, *op. cit.*, 285.

upholding the king's majesty and the nation. The nobles saw themselves as the true heart of the body and as the link, or intermediary, between the king and people.

The distinction between the *Couronne* and the king reflect the notion of the separation between the king's two bodies. An enemy of the crown is an enemy of the state, but an enemy of the king is only his personal enemy. An attack against the crown is an attack against all the members of the body politic, united in the crown. Nobles are obligated to defend an attack against the crown because it is self-defense from attack against themselves, even if it is by the king himself. The Reformation created a tearing or splitting of the body politic, the social body.<sup>326</sup> As discussed in Chapter Three, the sensitivity to a wounded body caused by civil war led to many metaphors in tragedies for the suffering of the land.

Ambivalence and uneasiness dominate the discussions about the right to revolt. Hotman in the *Epistre envoyée au Tigre de la France* (1560) wrote, "Si Caesar fut occi pour avoir pretendu le Sceptre injustement, doit-on permettre que tu vives toy, qui le demandes injustement?"<sup>327</sup> The structure of Grévin's *César* (1561) reveals the ambivalence implicit at the core of the argument. Placing Caesar's infamous death scene at the fulcrum of the tragedy is an explicit effort of containment. It is the overt act of controlling the birth of a tyrant and his power. Each character belonging to the Anti-Caesar faction speaks on the periphery of his assassination. And everyone who fights against the potential threat of tyranny is working for discord, however just their arguments might be, because Caesar's leadership incarnates order and centralized power. His mutilated and bloody corpse liberates the forces of discord and subversion and sets in motion the ensuing struggles between the contending forces that desire to fill the void previously occupied by one man.

---

<sup>326</sup> Calvin speaks about the consequences of religious divisions on social harmony in Ch. 20 of the *Institutes*.

<sup>327</sup> Lestringant, Rieu, and Tarrête, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

Grévin's tragedy uses much imagery of the king's two bodies, often linking Caesar and Rome. Caesar's victories are Rome's victories, and his death is Rome's death. "Qu'aurai tué d'un coup et César et l'Empire."<sup>328</sup> Similar to how the image of Roman ruins symbolizes the city's corpse for Renaissance poets, Caesar's body symbolizes Rome's life and death:

De Rome soit pour faire à César un tombeau,  
Il faut que de César la mort qu'elle procure  
Lui serve quant et quant de même sépulture;  
.....  
Que la mort de César soit de Rome la mort. (*César*, 134-42)

Mark Anthony also links the capital and Caesar: "Seule digne de Rome; et César et la ville / Sont dignes de tenir cette masse servile."<sup>329</sup> Would the people "font mourir celui qui leur donna la vie?"<sup>330</sup> The use of this imagery is an effective rhetorical tool that builds sympathy for Caesar. Regardless of Caesar's ambition or pride or even tyranny, his death will gravely wound the community and nation.

La Taille also appropriates the king's two bodies metaphor to increase sympathy for King Saul in the tragedy, *Saül le Furieux* (1572). Saul's character inspires pity and compassion throughout the play. He is a tyrant, no doubt, but his suffering and punishment seem unjust. His sons, the soldiers in his army, and the people have remained loyal to the king even in the face of a Philistine army that greatly outnumbers them. The people are not loyal to the man; they are faithful to the crown. The crown is a metonymy of divine right and as long as Saul wears it, he is God's anointed king.

La Taille employs imagery of the body to reveal Saul's inner sickness and disease. Saul awakens for a moment from his madness and notes his body with apprehension: "Mais qui m'a

---

<sup>328</sup> Grévin, *César*, 438.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-32.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

tout le corps saigneusement noircy?”<sup>331</sup> Nevertheless, Saul’s Escuyer, like David, refuses to kill the king and hurt the body of the Lord’s anointed, symbolic of rebellion against the nation and God. The Escuyer exclaims: “Que ce grand DIEU plustost escarbouille ma teste / De son foudre éclattant, avant que je m’appreste / De toucher vostre chef, que DIEU a eu si cher.”<sup>332</sup> Tragedies published in the early years of the French civil wars still illustrated the sacredness of the king’s body. Protecting the sacredness of Saul’s body is also the reason David kills the false Amalechite in the final act of the tragedy. David tells this man:

Jamais jamais jene l’ay tins pour tel: [mortal enemy]  
 Mais toy meschant, n’as tu point eu de crainte  
 D’ozier toucher celui que l’huyle sainte  
 Avoir sacré? as tu sans plus voulu  
 Meurtrir celui que DIEU nous a esleu?  
 Veu que moy-mesme estant mon adversaire,  
 Je ne l’ay fait quand je le pouvois faire?

Civil-war tragedies like La Taille’s two tragedies about Saul and David expose that the people suffer as a unified body. In *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, the people lament, “De mainte maladie en nostre corps sont cause.”<sup>333</sup> These tragedies also link the suffering of the body politic to the scarring of the land, for civil war causes the devastation and death of the land, a common motif in Renaissance literature. Garnier also reminds his audience in *Porcie* that acute lamentation will follow, “Si quelqu’un est Tyran, s’il opprime sa terre.” This discourse uncovers the intimate connection between the ruler, the body politic, and the land. Garnier extends the metaphor of suffering to the city and apostrophizes the capital, Rome, “O miserable Rome, et plus infortunée / Que nulle des citez.”<sup>334</sup> In Garnier’s tragedies about Rome, Garnier uses the imperial capital Rome as a metonymy for all cities, lands, and peoples who suffer because of civil war or

<sup>331</sup> La Taille, *Saül le Furieux*, 267.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 1075-77.

<sup>333</sup> La Taille, *La Famine*, 82.

<sup>334</sup> Garnier, *Porcie*, 977-86.

tyranny. In this same tragedy, Aree, a philosopher, envisions the Rome as one tomb containing a mass of corpses. The philosopher foresees the aftermath of civil war and predicts that, “Une profonde cendre, ondoyant sur les corps, / Couvrira sepulchrale une pile de morts.”<sup>335</sup> Tyranny and civil war clearly wound the national body, in this case not only the mortal land but also the people’s individual bodies. These bodies are not simply earth or flesh, the land and nation also have an immortal soul that often translates to *le bien public*.

The *bien public* (Good of the Republic) is immortal. It is the spirit, or soul, of the body politic, contrasting the respective mortal bodies of the King and the land. Rebellious groups constantly referred to the *bien public* as the justification for their revolt and called on others to fight for the *salut du Royaume*. Arlette Jouanna observes, “Les révoltes nobiliaires qui se sont produites de la mort du roi Henri II à l’avènement du règne personnel de Louis XIV ont toutes arboré la bannière du Bien public.”<sup>336</sup> In *César*, Brutus argues that killing a tyrant is justified for the “salut publique.”<sup>337</sup> Cassius says Caesar’s crime is against the people and believes he is dying for the public good.<sup>338</sup> On the other hand, the Messenger who reports Caesar’s death calls the assassins public enemies, enemies of the *bien public*. The Messenger says, “Et vous, traîtres, ingrats, vous, ennemis publiques, / Vous qui ressuscitez les pauvretés antiques.”<sup>339</sup> These traitors restored nothing good, he argues, they only initiated discord, wounding the nation’s soul, which contradicts their argument to justify Caesar’s assassination that they are helping the public good.

In *Saül le Furieux*, a tyrant fails to uphold the *bien public*. The chorus concludes from Israel’s misery:

---

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 905-06.

<sup>336</sup> Jouanna, *op. cit.*, 281.

<sup>337</sup> Grévin, *César*, 327, 334.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 451-53.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 957-58.

Le Roy est donc l'occasion  
De ceste malediction  
Et du desastre universel,  
Qui doit accable Israël. (*Saül le Furieux*, 901-04)

Nevertheless, the king's death will not solve the dilemma. In the tragedy, Saul desires to go into battle to die there, but the Escuyer admonishes the king: "Mais làs si vous mourez nous serons tous deceus / D'espoir, et servirons au Palestin inique. / Vivez donc non pour vous, mais pour le bien publique."<sup>340</sup> The king's life is inseparable from the public good.

After the events of 1572, civil-war tragedies advance the argument that death does resolve the problem of civil discord. In *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, David's moral dilemma about sacrificing Saul's family to lift the famine is glossed over. The biblical accounts of this episode, on the other hand, reveal David's anguish and hesitation about this solution. David hesitates because he wants to avoid becoming a new tyrant. He asks inwardly, is exterminating Saul's family for the public good because it's God's will, or is it simply to repay Saul's persecution? Only one line in the tragedy is needed to solve the dilemma. David says with confidence, "Non pour le bien public, amis par mon haine antique."<sup>341</sup> David's internal conflict about massacring Saul's family is less important than the tragic situation. Surprisingly, Saul's grandchildren are at peace with being the sacrifice and believe they are dying for the public good, hence the ease at which they go to their death.<sup>342</sup>

In *Cornélie* (1574), Cicero echoes the message in *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*. He says, "Vous choisissez au moins les plus coupables testes" for sacrifice in order to spare the rest.<sup>343</sup>

<sup>340</sup> La Taille, *Saül le Furieux*, 998-1000.

<sup>341</sup> La Taille, *La Famine ou les Gabéonites*, 618.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 997-1000.

<sup>343</sup> Garnier, *Cornélie*, 5.

“Et par la perte d’un, / Piteux, avez gardé tout un pauvre commun.”<sup>344</sup> Brutus argues they must kill Caesar to rescue the Republic. Caesar is the cause of discord; therefore, they must destroy, “Ce tyran, pour vanger nos publiques detresses.”<sup>345</sup> The chorus following this speech confirms the right to slay the tyrant. They, the people, have the right to “meurtrir les Tyrans pourprés. / Pour le salut de la Patrie.”<sup>346</sup> They argue that any man deserves eternal glory for ridding the people of a tyrant and for restoring the public good.

### Changing Perceptions

This perception of tyrannical royal authority shifted dramatically by the late 1580s. The tragedy, *Adonias*, published anonymously under the pseudonym Philone in 1586, gives an excellent reference point midway between the St. Bartholomew Massacres of 1572 and the Edict of Nantes in 1598. This tragedy, named after the central character, Adonias, displays the interesting shift in the current power relations in 1586. At this time Henry III, the current king of France, had all but lost control of royal power. The nation was divided between the Sainte Ligue, a group of Catholics discontent with the king’s hesitancy and tolerance toward Protestants in France, and the Huguenots led by Henry of Navarre. It was clear that Henry III would have no children and Henry of Navarre became next in line to the throne. Meanwhile, the Catholic League, led by another Henry, Duke de Guise, gained much popular support in France. Now it became necessary for the Protestant cause to establish legitimacy as royal authority instead of justifying a revolt against the established power.

The tragedy *Adonias* distinguishes itself from previous Protestant tragedies in its treatment of royal authority. This tragedy portrays the kingship of David, now old, weak, and

---

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 1236.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 1239-41.

wise, instead of the young rebel. More importantly, this king is no tyrant. Secretly, David has already made preparations for his young son Solomon to succeed him. The tragedy's anonymous author continues to use historical analogy through this plot to break dramatic illusion and emphasize the propaganda. Solomon represents the Protestant Henry of Navarre, while the Guise is seen in David's oldest son Adonias. In the tragedy, Adonias is the oldest and should inherit the throne. Adonias leaves the capital and establishes a simulacra of a royal court with a small army accompanied by Joab, the most able military general. He also brings with him chariots and clergy, and proceeds to a royal banquet. Similar to the failed triumphs in other tragedies, the banquet to display his power fails because it is based upon the pretense and show of power instead of upon true and sanctified power. This quasi-royal state, or *apolis*, also recalls the state within a state established by the Catholic League (Sainte Ligue) in France.

David, still living, should rebuke his son who is technically in a state of rebellion, like the Guise, because they have usurped the role of king while the king still reigns. The language used to describe Adonias is the same as that of a tyrant. He is blindly ambitious, egocentric, and thirsty for worldly power and authority. The tragedy clarifies the conflict between rebellion and the health of the people, using the vocabulary of pollution, body politic, and *bien public*. David receives the advice: "Ce mal public d'une rebellion / Tout connue a besoin d'un remède / Prompt et soudain."<sup>347</sup> Unlike previous tragedies, *Adonias* stages that the disease of rebellion, instead of the tyrant, must be eradicated to save the body politic. "Ainsi le mal, qui saisit tout le corps / Pour l'emporter, a besoin qu'on le taille"<sup>348</sup> No longer is it a question of tyranny, it is now only a question of rightful succession. David will die soon and this question must be resolved immediately to parry another civil war. Adonias or Solomon? Henry of Guise or Henry of

---

<sup>347</sup> Philone, *Adonias*, 1558.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 1570.



Navarre. The tragedy offers an unambiguous solution. David finally announces that Solomon is the official heir but Adonias refuses to give up his ambition. Solomon orders his brother's death and the chorus of the play sings for joy that this rebellion has been quashed. They also rejoice that the disease of tyranny, a glimpse of which was betrayed in Adonias' actions, has been preemptively diagnosed and treated.

These rhetorical and literary devices disrupt play's stage-illusion and expand the dramatic world to establish these civil-war tragedies as *exempla*. Tragedians create historical connections between Ancient Israel, Greece, and Rome and sixteenth-century France to sway the audience. The propaganda in the tragedy, by exposing the king's weakness, by naming the tyrant, by associating pollution and poison with certain characters, and by arguing what is good for the body politic, offer corrective solutions for the misery and suffering of the civil and religious wars in sixteenth-century France. The sub-genre of civil-war tragedies will disappear from French theater for thirty years. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly in the years 1636 to 1643, tragedians will recycle these plots during another period of civil conflict in France. The conclusion to this dissertation will offer insights into this remarkable phenomenon.

### Conclusion: Rebirth of Civil-War Tragedy in France (1636–43)

The sub-genre of civil-war tragedies reappeared in France during the years 1636–43. This short period saw the staging of five civil-war tragedies that reproduced the conflicts between Saul and David in ancient Israel and between Caesar, Pompey, and Brutus in ancient Rome. A sudden reappearance of these plots is striking because for the twenty years before and after, from Billard's *Saül le Furieux* (1610) to Racine's *Thébaïde* (1664), there were no French tragedies produced based upon the civil wars in Ancient Israel, Rome, or Greece.

The rebirth evokes intriguing questions for this study: Do the same rhetorical and literary devices (breaking dramatic illusion, *exemplum*, female tragic heroes, iconoclasm, etc.) also reappear and help in understanding these tragedies? Are these seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies engaged in contemporary issues of civil conflict and revolt? Comparing and contrasting these two eras of civil-war tragedy will help understand literary and political developments such as conceptions of tragedy, perceptions of monarchy, and the status of religious debate between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France.

This sudden burst of tragedy coincided with the reopening of war with Spain and of civil conflict in France. Seventeenth-century historian James Collins has remarked that, "The effort required of the two states was such that it dismembered Spain, led to civil war in France, and induced governmental bankruptcies in both countries."<sup>349</sup> Revolts erupted in 1636 and 1637 in southwestern France and in 1639 in Normandy. In addition to this civil conflict, the period witnessed a sudden power vacuum; Cardinal Richelieu died in December 1642 and Louis XIII a few months later in May 1643. A boy (Louis XIV) took over leadership of the nation, a situation reminiscent of the one in France after the death of Henry II in 1559. Similar to that period of

---

<sup>349</sup> James Collins, *The State in Early Modern France*, p. 71.

weak central authority under the young Charles IX, the young Louis XIV in the mid-seventeenth century faced scattered civil conflict during the *Fronde* (1648–53) near the beginning of his reign. Would this century repeat the civil conflict that consumed the last one? History shows that this generation avoided widespread conflict and that central authority was able to contain the violence and then usher in a new golden age under the strong leadership of Louis XIV.<sup>350</sup> An analysis of two civil-war tragedies, Scudéry's *La Mort de César* (1636), and Du Ryer's *Saül* (1642), will help explain the changing arena of politics and tragedy in France.

### **Interaction with the Audience: Breaking Dramatic Illusion**

In contrast to late sixteenth-century France, authorities in the seventeenth century consistently encouraged theater production. Cardinal Richelieu was the most powerful person in France during this era and he strictly controlled the theater because he saw the stage's effectiveness. G. Couton has studied the relationship between the theater and Richelieu's oversight and remarked that, "À la fin de 1634 ou en 1635, tout change : les événements se précipitent et il apparaît clairement que le Cardinal s'est décidé à avoir une politique culturelle et spécialement une politique théâtrale."<sup>351</sup> The theater became a booming business and this cultural phenomenon impacted tragedy. An analysis of liminary material in civil-war tragedy suggests tragedians wrote less to influence contemporary political and religious debates and instead aimed more to support the status quo, a move that was critical for their successful careers as playwrights.

The first chapter of this dissertation highlighted the importance of tragedy's connection to contemporary events and then tragedians' conscious effort to disrupt stage-illusion, a technique that increased spectators' engagement with civil and religious conflict in France. In order to

---

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75.

<sup>351</sup> Couton, *Richelieu et le théâtre*, p. 7.

support that point, the chapter analyzed liminary material, prologues, and opening monologues to uncover these efforts and to understand the effects of breaking the dramatic illusion of the stage performance. A look at seventeenth-century civil-war tragedy will offer insights into when these same literary and rhetorical devices were either retained or discarded by playwrights, and then help understand the effects of their use or neglect through contrast with the preceding century.

Seventeenth-century tragedians continue to employ the dedicatory epistle as prefaces to their plays. In the dedication of his *La Mort de César* (1636) to Cardinal Richelieu, Scudéry identifies Richelieu with Caesar, similar to the use of *exemplum* in sixteenth-century tragedies, but Scudéry clearly makes this comparison out of flattery instead of a model for emulation. Scudéry says, “J’ai cru que vous ne vous offenseriez pas de voir votre portrait au commencement de ce livre.”<sup>352</sup> Scudéry also makes the connection between Richelieu and kingship, “sa générosité ne le portait à n’avoir point d’autre ambition que celle de voir régner avec pompe et majesté le plus juste de tous les rois, aimant mieux en rester sujet que de s’en rendre le père.”<sup>353</sup> Richelieu had an opportunity to become Pope, but here Scudéry implies Richelieu’s humility to focus his service on the good of the French nation. Scudéry makes a more explicit connection between Richelieu and Caesar in the following statement:

Monseigneur, que je vous conjure à genoux, au nom de toute la France, de vouloir imiter cet illustre dictateur et de travailler vous-même à votre gloire, puisque vous en êtes seul capable, afin que tous les siècles suivants croient aussi bien que moi lorsqu’ils apprendront les miracles de votre vie, que si le grand CÉSAR fût venu dans le temps où vous êtes pour acquérir... (*La Mort de César*, p. 287)

Not only is Richelieu similar to Caesar, but the Cardinal exceeds Caesar’s triumphs and glory. This type of hyperbole is common in these dedications, yet it disturbs the illusion of the tragedy by inviting analogies between the stage and contemporary events or personages. Scudéry

---

<sup>352</sup> Scudéry, *La mort de Pompée*, p. 283. All citations for the liminary material are by page number.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

amplifies this propaganda in favor of Richelieu and Caesar by condemning Brutus and the republican ideas his character incarnates. Scudéry anticipates criticism of his stance, “Car je ne doute point qu’il ne se trouve des BRUTUS qui le [Caesar] persécuteront encore dans mon ouvrage.”<sup>354</sup> By controlling the interpretation of this famous episode (Caesar’s assassination), Scudéry manipulates the audience’s response to the episode’s inherent meaning of nobility’s struggle against domination by an absolute ruler, for example, Caesar or Richelieu.

In this dedication, Scudéry also implies a mutual obligation between tragedy (the stage) and ruler to support and protect one another. Scudéry announces this pact to Richelieu: “Mais comme on ne saurait faire que deux âges tant éloignés se réduisent en un, je sais du moins que ce même CÉSAR, qui pouvait être votre captif, a besoin de votre protection.”<sup>355</sup> The double-entendre suggests that protecting this tragedy (César) will also safeguard himself (César).

The dedication reveals the desire to maintain and defend the status quo. In the *Au Lecteur*, Scudéry admits proudly that he has followed all contemporary rules for tragedy. He says, “Je sais bien que cette tragédie est dans les règles.”<sup>356</sup> By showing his preoccupation with following the rules, Scudéry places himself deeper in Richelieu’s camp. The status quo is strong monarchy in place of strong regional princes, nobles, or other form of composite governments and rule that dominated, and perhaps weakened, sixteenth-century France.<sup>357</sup> Scudéry betrays this prejudice against republicanism by condemning Brutus:

Je sais bien que Brutus a des sectateurs, qui ne le trouveront pas bon, mais outre que j’écris sous une monarchie et non pas dans une république, je confesse que je n’ai pas de ce Romain les hauts sentiments qu’ils en ont. Car s’il aimait tant la liberté de sa patrie, je trouve qu’il devait mourir avec elle ... Il ne devait point devenir le flatteur de CÉSAR pour s’en rendre après l’assassin, ou plutôt le parricide. (*La Mort de César*, p. 292)

---

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>357</sup> See Introduction or Chapters 1 and 4 for discussions on this regional phenomenon in sixteenth-century France.

This statement reveals numerous rhetorical points that form a striking contrast to Scudéry's predecessors in late sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies. Scudéry's emphasis on monarchy as opposed to republic implies a qualitative difference in favor of absolute monarchy. Previous tragedies about Caesar and Brutus, or Caesar and Pompey, universally favored the vocabulary of republic as opposed to the tyranny inherent in monarchy. This reversal in perspective of the present monarchy suggests either approval of the royal court, or of the court's domination of the stage, a critical weapon that Church and Monarchy had failed to control in sixteenth-century France. Scudéry also highlights the relationship between king/father and regicide/parricide, rhetoric he will employ in the body of the tragedy. This rhetoric condemns Brutus' character who will escalate from flatterer to deceiver to parricide.

The portrait of Brutus is in striking contrast to ancient sources, Plutarch and Suetonius, for example, who paint Brutus as an example of a virtuous and honorable Roman. Scudéry admits in the "Au Lecteur" preface to his tragedy, *La Mort de César*, "Je n'ai pas de ce Romain les hauts sentiments qu'ils en ont." This shows the debate has continued between Caesar/Brutus and absolute monarchy/republic, and reveals that this tragedy smothers republican sentiment.

Similar to the prologues in sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies, the Prologue of Scudéry's *Mort de César* wanders from the tragedy's plot by comparing the Tiber and the Seine, metonymies for Rome and Paris. This dialogue extends the dramatic world from the stage to include the Parisian audience and their environment. Scudéry's decision to add a prologue to the play suggests it is the nature of civil-war tragedies to break stage-illusion and to have an inherent political message. Interestingly, Scudéry mocks the use of prologues in both his *Comédie des comédiens* and his *L'Amour caché par l'amour*. In the former, the playwright inserts a dialogue between Prologue and Argument, personifications that allow the author to make fun of both. The

genre must insist on this type of prologue since Scudéry dares to place one in his *Mort de César* in spite of his own criticisms.

The prologue to this tragedy, entitled *Le Tibre, La Seine*, imposes a connection between the two places and times. This connection must be made in a prologue, outside the illusion of the theater, because making this connection to France would break the contemporary rules of tragedy. In this prologue, the Tiber has traveled to gaze upon and to praise the Seine. The Seine, in all humility, claims King Louis (Louis XIII) is the source of this renown and fame. The Seine's final statement cements this connection, saying, "Sache que le destin m'a fait lire en ses lois, / Qu'une seconde fois / Il veut joindre nos LYS et ton AIGLE ROMAINE."<sup>358</sup> The tragedies insist on these comparisons not to display the greatness of the one to the other, but to invite the audience to associate the two. This monarchical propaganda might be commonplace, yet it takes on greater significance in civil-war tragedy since these plays stage revolt and regicide, two topics that translate to critical issues in contemporary France.

Du Ryer's dedicatory epistle for his tragedy, *Saül*, offers a unique twist and claims to dedicate the tragedy to nobody and to everybody, because all can find diversion and instruction. After this statement, Du Ryer says he wishes to dedicate the tragedy to Saul. He claims, "Il semblera sans doute que je veuille interesser tout le monde en la deffense et en la protection de Saül, puisque chacun peut dire que je luy en fais un present, it que c'est à luy que ie le dedie."<sup>359</sup> This casts Saul as an *exemplum* and invites the audience to apply these episodes to contemporary events. Since the story of Saul's madness and loss of divine grace for his kingship gave many sixteenth-century playwrights a model for justifying revolt, Du Rhyer's clear sympathy for Saul,

---

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-02. Citations from the tragedy are by line number.

<sup>359</sup> Du Ryer, *Saül*, p. 17. Citations from the dedicatory epistle are by page number.

a king condemned for tyranny, reveals the tragedy will offer no foundation for rebelling against any form of kingship.

Saul's opening monologue is concise and swift, outlining the problems and conflict without impeding the action. In sixteenth-century tragedies, these opening monologues often gave playwrights an opportunity to insert a rhetorical set-piece. Alone on the stage, the protagonist could speak directly to the audience and use this advantage to inspire the audience's sympathy, breaking the stage-illusion and enforcing the play's propaganda. Saul's monologue, on the other hand, enhances dramatic illusion by immediately pulling the audience into the action. This contrast of dramatic technique highlights the primary distinction between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tragedies, the former are composed of static monologue and dialogue, rhetorical set-pieces that impede the action, while the latter cut much of this exposition, begin *in medias res*, and use dialogue to advance action instead of comment upon it. In sixteenth-century tragedy, much of this static commentary was contained in the chorus.

### **The Absent Chorus**

Seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies abandon the once ubiquitous chorus. The absence of the chorus is most telling for changes and developments in tragedy, especially the move from static monologue or dialogue and flat characters to emphasis on action and psychology. Chapter Two has argued that the chorus was a vital element for tragedians to disrupt the illusion of the tragedy and persuade spectators. The chorus interrupts the action to comment upon stage events.

Sixteenth-century tragedies often become static and fail to progress because of these choral interludes that only interrupt the action, hence many criticisms of these tragedies. Those tragedians sacrificed developing character and action for achieving greater engagement from the



audience, not engagement in the story, but in the propaganda framed by the struggle between Saul and David or Caesar and Brutus. Seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies, on the other hand, neglect this opportunity, suggesting they desire less to debate contemporary issues in their tragedies than to refine the art of tragedy and storytelling.

Scudéry's tragedy contains a chorus to which he gives a minuscule part in the last scene of the play. The part may appear minuscule on paper, but the chorus gives the most critical lines of the tragedy. The chorus of Romans appears opportunely at the end of the play to give the tragedy's conclusion, commentary that is intended to engage the audience in interpreting the play. In the tragedy, the chorus is a generic group of Romans, representatives of the common people. It should be recalled that Scudéry linked Romans and Frenchmen in the Prologue of *Le Tibre, La Seine*. The chorus agrees that Brutus and his conspirators are criminals, who have fled Rome guiltily. They also agree Caesar's death is a tragedy. After this commentary, the citizens leave Caesar's funeral and burn the houses of the conspirators. This should be the reaction to those who threaten the monarchy.

Du Ryer's *Saül* contains no chorus, yet certain characters seem to take over its function. For example, Michol, David's wife and Saul's daughter, comments on the action much like a chorus. It is useful to remember that the chorus was often composed of women attending the lead female. Her soliloquies work as asides, briefly set apart from the action on-stage, because she is the only character in front of the spectators. She comments on the action for the audience instead of advancing the action, a device similar to the choral interlude. This substitution of a character for a chorus reveals the seventeenth-century shift to a focus on character and plot development instead of rhetoric. The absence of a chorus also reveals the downgrading of female protagonists in these civil-war tragedies from tragic hero to secondary character.

### **Absent Female Tragic Heroes**

Because so many sixteenth-century tragedians choose female protagonists as tragic heroes, and because of the female protagonist's dual capability to promote power and empathy in her role as widow, Chapter Three has argued that these women are more effective tragic heroes than men in civil-war tragedies. Nevertheless, seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies stage no female tragic heroes; however, all the tragedies have large roles for secondary female characters, most notably for the wives of the male protagonists. Yet, unlike sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies, these tragedies either dismiss the opportunity to create pathos by staging a widow, or ignore the woman after she is a widow. The tragedies all center on the male protagonists. This distinction uncovers the focus on glory, honor, and courage in lieu of pathos and sympathy. The female characters are little more than echoes of their husbands' voices and they have little independence, a striking contrast to the strong female protagonists in sixteenth-century tragedies.

Scudéry's tragedy, for example, opposes two couples: Caesar/Calpurnia, and Brutus/Porcie. Porcie shows little distinction from her husband Brutus and she claims to follow whatever his path may be even to death. In this tragedy, Calpurnie gives the longest harangue of the play, a monologue taking the form of an apology, in which she only desires to be worthy of her husband Caesar and to oppose accusations of tyranny. Both Calpurnia and Porcie have visions of impending disaster, adding to the symmetry of the tragedy. This illusion of balanced debate between the two couples, representatives of Monarchy and Republic, is destroyed by the unfavorable portrayal of Brutus and his wife Porcie. Act III scene 4 stages an interesting confrontation between the two wives, Calpurnia and Porcie. Calpurnia pleads with Porcie to use her influence to stop the conspiracy against Caesar, but Porcie lies and speaks about her

husband's (Brutus) great virtue and friendship for Caesar. Brutus would never harm his friend, she concludes. The audience, of course, would know the story and recognize this deceit, influencing a negative impression of the woman, her husband, and their regicide.

Michol in Du Ryer's *Saül* has an extended role in the first half of the tragedy and is the only female in the tragedy other than the Pythonesse, the witch/necromancer who evokes Samuel's ghost. It is interesting that Du Ryer chooses not to include David anywhere in the tragedy, yet Michol, his wife, speaks in his place and defends his actions. Michol's presence and David's absence weakens his image as well as his case for rebellion against Saul. Michol suggests David can help Saul but Saul refuses and says this rebellion reveals David's true loyalty – his ambition. A messenger announces that David is marching with the enemy Philistine army and Michol begins to question her husband's motives. Du Ryer neglects this opportunity to develop Michol's dilemma, the character who could be the most tragic of the story because she is torn between a husband and a father, yet Du Ryer decides to silence Michol for the last two acts. This silence suggests Du Ryer only employs Michol to cast doubt and suspicion on David, and after completing this mission, she disappears for the rest of the tragedy.

### **No Dialogue of Resistance**

Chapter Four illustrated that civil-war tragedies produced a subversive representation of royal authority because they staged disobedience to that authority, inspiring dangerous political interpretations of the performance. The chapter began by analyzing the paradox of triumphal episodes and then showing how these scenes develop the king's image from monarch to tyrant. The tyrant became a symbol of pollution or of law breaking, a conclusion implying either iconoclasm in a religious context or regicide in a political one. In either case, the debate over the

right to revolt became the primary question of the tragedy. Is it justified to rebel against tyranny or to kill the tyrant? This question pervaded sixteenth-century drama but is strictly avoided in seventeenth-century tragedies.

As seen in Chapter Four, sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies stage tyranny and the people's response to it. In seventeenth-century tragedy, the king, even if betraying some hint of tyranny, is full of courage and glory. These tragedies smother the debate over the right to revolt by removing the question of tyranny and then replacing that strongly negative image with one of the king as loving father, courageous warrior, and wise statesman, even if the monarchy borders on absolutism. Both Caesar in *La Mort de César* and Saul in *Saül* exemplify this model of seventeenth-century kingship in French tragedy.

Brutus and Cassius, two of Caesar's future assassins, open the tragedy, *La Mort de César*, with a dialogue that evokes history to support their treasonous actions. Brutus explains he will continue his family heritage of liberating the Republic from tyrants. They also legitimate their decision to kill Caesar by naming him the new Tarquin in Rome, echoing many such arguments in sixteenth-century tragedies, pamphlets, and other polemics that a tyrant is the enemy of the people and of their liberty. Brutus nuances this *lieu commun* and adds that a subject must obey the laws and the person of a rightful king. He admits, "C'est là mon sentiment ; et je tiens que sans crime / On ne peut renverser un trône légitime."<sup>360</sup> However, Caesar is not a legitimate king. Therefore, Brutus has the right to kill Caesar. This logic withdraws protection of Caesar's person and anticipates accusations of *lèse-majesté*. Next, Brutus paints Caesar as a tyrant, further sanctifying his assassination. These necessary steps to justify revolt or regicide all mirror the same rhetorical process found in sixteenth-century tragedies; however, Scudéry's Brutus begins to deviate from this path, which may have evoked the audience's sympathy and gained support

---

<sup>360</sup> Scudéry, *La Mort de César*, 26-27.

for his actions, but he betrays a disdain and mistrust of the people instead of building himself up as their champion. Brutus observes:

Ce faible et lâche peuple, après avoir permis,  
 Tout ce qu'ont désiré ses mortels ennemis,  
 Au milieu du péril se croit sur le rivage,  
 Et baise encor la main qui le met en servage. (*La Mort de César*, 101-04)

While Brutus insults the people, often interpreted as representing the audience, Caesar shows he is the true champion of the people. Scudéry's portrait of Caesar centers on the weight and responsibility of kingship. The people should avoid accusing or criticizing their monarch because they cannot understand this duty. Caesar is not a tyrant and his only crime is being too forgiving and nice. Anthony observes, "César pêche en douceur."<sup>361</sup> Caesar's fate is linked to the nation's destiny. Calpurnia says, "Bons dieux, sauvez César pour sauver tout l'Etat."<sup>362</sup> His death will be a common death because he is the literal and symbolic head of the body politic.

In Act III Scene 1, Anthony gives a long speech highlighting the ignorance and vulgarity of the common people contrasted by the strength and wisdom of the ruling class. However, Caesar contradicts Anthony and refutes his reasoning that the king should rule sternly, the *lieu commun* of *clémence et rigueur*. This portrait is different from the various Caesars in sixteenth-century tragedy because in this tragedy Caesar reveals no ambition for power, renown, or glory; he only wishes to be loved and naively refuses to believe suggestions that Brutus is scheming against him. Sixteenth-century tragedies stage the ambivalence inherent in Caesar's leadership. His ambition casts doubt on his sincerity or even his ability to do what is best for the *bien public*, the good of the people. Sixteenth-century tragedies stage this dilemma, but Scudéry focuses on the tragedy of Caesar's death rather than the debate about the right to slay a tyrant.

---

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

One of these sixteenth-century tragedies, Grévin's *César*, probably inspired Scudéry's tragedy, especially seen in the structure, since characters in each tragedy give speeches in the same order and then reverse that order after Caesar's death. Grévin's tragedy, however, promoted a positive image of Brutus. Scudéry instead makes Brutus the man who deceives Caesar into going to the Senate, and hence to his death (Act IV scene 3). This contradicts history's portrait of Brutus, a picture of a virtuous and noble man. Scudéry's decision to cast Brutus as a clever manipulator makes him unscrupulous in achieving what he wants and fulfilling his selfish desires. This distinction persuades the reader to accept a favorable image of Caesar/Richelieu and a blackened portrait of Brutus, the archetype of the republican and anti-absolutism freedom fighter. For the audience's sympathy, Brutus' character cannot overcome his betrayal of Caesar masked by friendship. Brutus exposes his character when he says, "L'apparence est trompeuse ; et souvent un ami / Qu'on estime parfait ne l'est pas à demi."<sup>363</sup> This hypocrisy contrasts his praise of honor, glory, and loyalty. An audience would be unable to avoid perceiving this hypocrisy and then to view Brutus favorably. All his words from this point forward will be suspect. Brutus also betrays little hesitation about killing Caesar, hesitation that is found in sixteenth-century tragedies. His command to "Servez bien le publique" also seems to mock this foundational support for revolt.<sup>364</sup>

In contrast to this portrait of Brutus is Caesar, who says with much sincerity, "Entre les vrais amis on ne doit rien cacher. Rien, venant de leur part, ne me saurait fâcher."<sup>365</sup> This apparent humility demonstrated by Caesar following Brutus' more self-serving speech makes a striking contrast. Caesar repeats *rien* to amplify his sincerity and to suggest there is no just cause to betray friendship, and by extension, revolt or regicide. Caesar's words and actions uncover

---

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 413-14.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 480.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 485-86.

none of the usual traits common to tyranny; his words and appearances completely lack ambition. Furthermore, Caesar is content with the glory he has obtained and is resigned to his fate. Caesar says, “J’ai cherché de la gloire, et je crois en avoir.” He also admits, “Il m’est indifférent quand j’en serai vaincu.”<sup>366</sup>

In addition to this contrast, Caesar uses vocabulary of Republic, while Brutus and his speeches about liberty and tyranny inserts vocabulary of Empire into his discourse. Brutus claims, “Nous sauvons en ce jour, par la perte d’un homme, / Non pas nous seulement, mais l’empire de Rome.”<sup>367</sup> In addition to Brutus’ betrayal, his companions and fellow assassins despise Caesar’s gifts and overtures of friendship. They mirror the *felon* archetype commonly found in medieval literature more than the self-sacrificing martyrs of liberty. The tragedy emphasizes how the conspirators trick Caesar into going to the Senate and how they slyly hide daggers under their robes. A philosopher overhears their plot and remarks, “Ils parlent de sauver et vont perdre l’Etat.”<sup>368</sup> This aside effectively separates the character from the on-stage activity as if speaking only to the spectators, offering a rare piece of commentary found in this tragedy.

Scudéry also employs irony to further condemn Brutus’ deceit in contradistinction to Caesar’s mercy. Caesar asks Brutus if he should go to the Senate to accept the crown. Brutus insists that he goes, “Pour le bien du public vous serez éternel.”<sup>369</sup> Brutus probably smirks or smiles slyly here, but the irony will appear more clearly after Caesar’s death, for Caesar’s name will label all successive Roman emperors; and in the fifth act, the people will perform a ceremony of apotheosis, all illustrating Caesar’s perpetual glory. In sixteenth-century tragedies,

---

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 754-61.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 607-08.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 686.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 850.

these ceremonies of triumph or apotheosis labeled the tyrant, now they illustrate his strong and rightful leadership.

A messenger reports in the final scene that he has seen Caesar rise above Rome into the heavens, and at that instant, a new star began to sparkle. Anthony hears this news and addresses the Roman people:

Mais Romains, savez-vous quel est votre devoir?  
 Puisqu'il a mérité de la chose publique,  
 Qu'elle érige en son nom un temple magnifique.  
 Allons le dessiner ; et qu'on sache en tous lieux  
 QUE L'ILLUSTRE CESAR EST AU NOMBRE DES DIEUX.  
 (*La Mort de César*, 1282-86)

In this speech, Anthony further associates Caesar with the people by recalling his faithfulness to the “chose publique” (*Res publica*) instead of associating him with vocabulary of Empire. This completes the apotheosis of Caesar, a leader who always thought of the people first, for Anthony tells how each Roman will receive a certain amount of money according to Caesar’s will and testament. The chorus makes its only appearance for Anthony’s speech, confirming Caesar’s connection to the people, and by extension, the audience.

Du Ryer’s portrayal of Saul’s tyranny and David’s rebellion offers a similar view of kingship and revolt, one that removes this debate by eliding the question and replacing it with a positive image of kingship. In Du Ryer’s tragedy, *Saül*, Saul is a cornelian hero: stoic, virtuous, courageous, fighting a losing battle but upholds his dignity and honor. The tragedy continuously builds sympathy for Saul, and since David has no part in the tragedy, no character appears to question Saul’s leadership. Jonathan indicates the problems are not a question of civil war, the problem is foreign attack by the Philistines. Jonathan also indicates the problem is Saul’s self-



doubt. Jonathan reveals, “Que le Trosne qui tremble est à demy tombé.”<sup>370</sup> Saul discloses the problem is not David and rebellion, like in earlier tragedies, but he says, “C’est le Ciel ennemy, c’est Dieu qui m’espouvante.”<sup>371</sup> Yet immediately after this statement Abner, his general, announces the people have revolted in Jerusalem. This is an anachronism since Jerusalem did not become the capital, or even fall under Jewish control, until after the death of Saul when David conquered the stronghold. This rebellion is absent from biblical accounts where the majority of Saul’s people and army remain faithful to the end. The conflict between David and Saul appears as a minor episode and obstacle in the greater conflict between Saul and God or Saul and Fate.

This shift from David versus Saul to a focus on Saul’s struggle against his fate causes great dissimilarities with sixteenth-century tragedies about Saul and David. The tragedy appears similar to Jean de La Taille’s *Saül le Furieux*, yet the strongest distinction is David’s absence and silence. In La Taille’s tragedy, David arrives after Saul’s death and restores peace and harmony, taking his rightful place on the throne. This restoration under David implies his rebellion was justified, a view of revolt that Du Ryer avoids by casting doubt on David, similar to Scudéry’s treatment of Brutus, and then only allowing him to answer charges through the voice of his wife, Michol. Des Masure’s tragedies about Saul and David also appear dissimilar to Du Ryer’s treatment of the same events. Similar to Des Masures tragedies, there is a deceptive royal counselor named Phalti who slanders David, but his character is barely developed and has little influence on events. During the battle with the Philistines, this Phalti fights bravely, suggesting the author cares little for David’s image and more for upholding Saul’s glory and courage in the midst of adversity.

---

<sup>370</sup> Du Ryer, *Saül*, 60. All citations from the tragedy are by line number.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

Du Ryer, however, discloses a less favorable portrait of Saul than Scudéry's Caesar; Saul is tainted by hints of madness, paroxysm, and idolatry, yet these weaknesses make Saul appear all the more courageous in his struggle to maintain Israel's glory. Saul has placed himself above the Law and disrespects the people; nevertheless, the tragedy does not paint a tyrant. The audience should feel compassion for Saul when he goes to the witch for help, for Saul recognizes, "Ce dessein est un crime, / Mais la nécessité le rendra legitime, / C'est le dernier espoir d'un Prince malheureux."<sup>372</sup> Saul is more reasonable and receptive to counsel than in sixteenth-century tragedies. His character is significantly more complex and the inner turmoil plays a greater role. Saul even shows humility by confessing his helplessness: "Bref, je sçay mon devoir, mais je ne puis le suivre; / Un pouvoir que le mien ne sçauroit ébranler / M'entraîne avec horreur où j'ay honte d'aller."<sup>373</sup> The tragedy forms an apologetic for Saul and for monarchy when the ruler enters into a gray area of absolutism, while revolt against absolutism is given little development.

By this favorable image of Saul and absence of David, Du Ryer's tragedy condemns rebellion against the monarchy and defines all revolt as, "Que qui fuit de son Roy commence à le trahir."<sup>374</sup> This highlights the growing importance in seventeenth-century France of remaining near the royal court to prove loyalty and service. Revolt is distance from the court, for this separation betrays a hidden agenda. The royal court is a family. Family is at the center of the conflict and the civil conflict is a family affair; David is Saul's son-in-law and all major roles except Phalti are members of Saul's immediate family. At one point, Saul orders his daughter to commit bigamy and marry Phalti to replace David, for he no longer merits membership in the family. The question framed in Act Two asks whether it is just to recall and forgive the prodigal

---

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 357-59.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 838-40.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.

son, David. Saul agrees to send for David at the end of this act but then quickly revokes the command. This is a wise decision because they soon discover that David is with the enemy Philistine army, a fact absent from earlier tragedies. David has betrayed the family.

The tragedy emphasizes Saul's dual role as father and king and his struggle between these two roles. Jonathan best summarizes the theme of family in the tragedy:

Voulez-vous conserver vostre Maison naissante?  
 Voulez-vous desormais la rendre plus puissante?  
 Conservez vostre Empire, en ce commun effroy,  
 Puisque tout Empire est la Maison d'un Roy. (*Saül*, 1341-44)

The concept of family extends to the theme of obedience. It opens a debate on whether it is more important to be father or king, and whether Jonathan must first obey Saul the king or Saul the father. Saul desires to preserve both his kingdom and his family, but a dilemma arises. His sons, his family, are critical to winning the upcoming battle against the Philistines. Jonathan convinces Saul to allow him to fight by arguing, "Je serois fâché de vous avoir pour Pere, / Si l'amour de mon Pere inutile pour moy / Me devoit empescher de perir pour mon Roy."<sup>375</sup> Saul's fatherly love of Jonathan reflects his paternal love for all his soldiers and for all his people.

### Summary and Conclusion

Comparing and contrasting these two eras of civil-war tragedy has helped understand literary and political developments such as conceptions of tragedy, perceptions of monarchy, and the status of religious debate between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France. The stories of Saul and Caesar have inspired such a fascinating variety because their characters betray ambiguity; they were strong leaders who brought glory to their people, and yet this triumph tempted them to, or was driven by, pride, ambition, and absolutism. For example, Caesar's death is the archetype of

---

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 1366-68.

political assassination. It is also the model for political debates on tyranny, royalty, and republic. Brutus and Caesar incarnate these political ideas and ideals, while their struggle highlights the antagonism between two political regimes and types. On the one hand there are Alexander, Saul, and Caesar – the invincible warriors yet absolute rulers, and on the other hand there are David, Brutus, and Pompey – the stoic, virtuous defenders of liberty, yet who believe the people's aspirations mirror their own and so oppose the ruler, opposition that leads to civil war. The positive or negative performance of these archetypes enlightens the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century debates over absolutism and revolt.

It was impossible to avoid political connections between these civil-war tragedies and contemporary events. In the sub-genre of civil-war tragedy, David rebels against the anointed king Saul, Caesar contends against Pompey, Roman senators slay the victorious Caesar, and Antigone disobeys her uncle and king, Creon. Authors adopted these famous examples of revolt to break the dramatic illusion of the play, creating crucial parallels with contemporary France. Historical examples gave concrete support for the propaganda clothed by the tragedy and tragedians took advantage of the ambiguity inherent in these examples to persuade the audience. This is the reason seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies can mirror the plots of sixteenth-century tragedies and then project striking contrasts.

In seventeenth-century tragedy, monologues are shortened and the dialogue advances at a faster pace. Didactic passages such as the chorus and rhetorical set-pieces do not impede the action. Tragedians employ some textual commentary, but they make these passages dramatic by using them as arguments to influence the protagonist's actions instead of to comment upon them after the fact. The characters appear more submissive and stoic than inspired to take action. Caesar says, "C'est à moi d'obéir et de baiser les yeux / Remettant ma fortune entre les mains

des dieux.”<sup>376</sup> Scudéry’s tragedy also highlights maintaining courage and dignity in the face of a tragic and unavoidable destiny, a *topos* that appears in sixteenth-century tragedy but is secondary to religious and political causes of this *destin malheureux*.

Most striking is the absence of religious debate in the seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies. Du Ryer’s *Saül* avoids the Catholic and Protestant debates so prevalent in sixteenth-century tragedies about David and Saul. Gone are the hymns and psalms that composed over half the lines in Philone’s *Adonias* (1586) and 22% of Des Masures’ *David combattant* (1562). Gone are the biblical citations on the title page. Gone are priests and chorus that gave homilies to expand upon religious content in the play: Gone is the substance of sixteenth-century civil-war tragedies.

Another striking absence, the hiatus of female tragic heroes, suggests the tragedies offer less compassion for the people’s misery and a greater sympathy for the ruler’s struggles. Female tragic heroes in sixteenth-century tragedies offered the widow as a tragic hero and metaphor to reflect the suffering of the land, nation, and people. This illustrates the weakness of central authority and the royal court in the sixteenth-century France and its strength in the seventeenth century. The seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies, in spite of these differences, continue to break dramatic illusion to a small degree, but much clearer is the tragedians’ attempt to maintain the image of power and greatness. These playwrights focus on male tragic heroes to stage the dilemma of leadership and affirm the king’s unquestionable authority and sovereignty over the people.

The strong contrasts between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century civil-war tragedies affirm the assertion made at the beginning of this study: sixteenth-century tragedy is distinct to its literary and historical context. Scholars overlook these tragedies because critical editions are

---

<sup>376</sup> Scudéry, *La Mort de César*, 737-38.

rare, because primary texts are distant and difficult to view, and because previous scholarship has labeled them as inferior works of art. However, this study validates the genre as essential to penetrating the complex and problematic relationship between social conflict and artistic performance during the civil and religious wars in sixteenth-century France. The sub-genre of civil-war tragedies highlights this social conflict, making the conflict staged in these tragedies a cultural artifact that reveals relationships between groups of people, history, and literature. These performances need further examination because they signal tragedy as a powerful metaphor of cultural dissent. Sixteenth-century tragedy remains distinguished by its historical context, and signals an intimate connection between French tragedy's birth and the civil and religious wars of the last half of the sixteenth century.

**FIN**

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Anonymous. *Tragédie nouvelle appelée Pompée En laquelle se voit la mort d'un grand Seigneur, faite pare une malheureuse trahison*. Lausanne, 1579. Bibliothek München.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Compendium of Theology*. Trans. Richard J. Regan. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. Stephen Halliwell. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
- . *Art of Rhetoric*. Trans. H.C. Lawson-Tancred. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1991.
- d'Aubigné, Agrippa. *Les Tragiques*. Ed. Frank Lestringant. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986.
- Augustine. *City of God*, Trans. Marcus Dods. New York: Modern Library, 1950.
- . *City of God against the Pagans*. Trans. R.W. Dyson. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Balmas, Enea and Michel Dassonville, eds. *La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX*. 9 Vols. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986-97.
- . *La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri III*. 3 Vols. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999-.
- Bèze, Théodore de. *Abraham sacrifiant*. Ed. Marguerite Soulié. 2006.
- Billard, Claude. *Saül le Furieux*. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal GD-22071, 1610.
- Bouscal, Guerin de. *Mort de Brute et de Porcie*. Bnf. 1637.
- Budé, Guillaume. "L'Institution du Prince." *Le Prince dans la France des XVIe et XVIIe siècles*. Eds. Claude Bontems, Léon-Pierre Raybaud and Jean-Pierre Brancourt. Paris: 1965
- Calvin, Jean. *Institution de la religion chrestienne*. Ed. Olivier Millet. Geneva: Droz, 2008.
- Chaulmer. *Mort de Pompée*. Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1638.
- Coignac, Joachim de. *La Desconfiture de Goliath*. British National Library, 1551.
- Corneille, Pierre. *Pompée*. Ed. H.T. Barnwell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

- Desiré, Artus. *Le contre poison des cinquante deux chansons de Clement Marot, faussement intitulés par lui, psalmes de David, par Artus Desiré*. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal 8 T 934, 1560.
- Des Masures, Louis. "Les Tragédies saintes." *La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX*. Vol. 2. Eds. Enea Balmas and Michel Dassonville. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986.
- Du Bellay, Joachim. *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*. Geneva : Droz, 2001.
- . *La Monomachie de David et de Goliath*. Ed. E. Caldarini. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1981.
- . "Regrets, Antiquitez de Rome." *Du Bellay et ses sonnets romains*. Ed. Yvonne Bellenger. Paris: Champion, 1994.
- Du Ryer, Pierre. *Saül*. Ed. Henry Lancaster. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1931.
- Erasmus. "De copia or De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo." *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style in Collected Works of Erasmus*. Trans. Betty I. Knott. Ed. James K. McKonica et al. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.
- Garnier, Robert. *Théâtre complet*, Ed. Jean-Dominique Beaudin. Paris: Editions Classiques Garnier, 2009.
- . *Oeuvres Complètes*. Ed. Raymond Lebègue. Paris: Société Les Belles Lettres, 1949.
- . *Antigone ou La Pitié*. Ed. Jean-Dominique Beaudin. Paris: Champion, 1999.
- . *Porcie, Cornélie*. Ed. Raymond Lebègue. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973.
- . *Les Juifves*. Ed. Sabine Lardon. Paris: Champion, 1999.
- Grévin, Jacques. "Brief discours pour l'intelligence de ce théâtre." *Théâtre complet et poésies choisies de Jacques Grévin*. Ed. Lucien Pinvert. Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1922.
- . "César." *La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri II et de Charles IX*. Vol. 2. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986.
- . *César de Jacques Grévin*. Ed. Jeffrey Foster. Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1974.
- . *La Liberté vangée, ou CESAR poignardé*. Ed. Raphaël du Petit Val. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (GD 12916), 1606.
- Gringore, Pierre. *Les Entrées royales à Paris*. Ed. Cynthia Brown. Geneva: Droz, 2005.
- Jodelle, Etienne. *Cléopâtre captive*. Eds. Françoise Charpentier, Jean-Dominique Beaudin, and José Sanchez. Mugron: Editions José Feijoo, 1990.



- La Taille, Jean de. *Dramatic Works: Saül le furieux, La famine ou les Gabéonites*. Eds. Hall and Smith. London: The Athlone Press, 1972.
- . *Œuvres de Jean de La Taille, Seigneur de Bondaroy*. Ed. René de Maulde La Clavière. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968, 1878.
- . *Saül le furieux; La Famine, ou Les Gabéonites*. Ed. Eliot Forsyth. Paris: Marcel Didier, 1968.
- Montaigne, Michel de. *Les Essais*. Eds. Pierre Villey and Verdun Saulnier. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004.
- Montchrestien. *Les Tragédies*. Ed. Julleville. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1970.
- Mont-Justin. *David persecuté*. British National Library. 1601.
- Philone. "Adonias." *La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri III: (1586–1589) Vol. 5*. Eds. Enea Balmas, Michel Dassonville, et al. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009.
- Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, Ed. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library,
- Rabelais, François. *Oeuvres complètes*. Ed. Mireille Huchon. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.
- Ronsard, Perre de. *Oeuvres complètes*. Ed. Gustave Cohen. Paris: Gallimard, 1958.
- Robelin, Jean. *La Thébaïde. La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri III: (1582–1584) Vol. 3*. Eds. Enea Balmas, Michel Dassonville, et al. Introduction by Daniela Boccassini. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002.
- Sébillot, Thomas. *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche classique, 1990.
- Scudéry, Georges de. *La Mort de César*. Ed. Dominique Moncond'huy. Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 1992.

## Secondary Sources

- Altman, Rick. *A Theory of Narrative*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Aubailly, Jean-Claude. "L'Image du prince dans le théâtre de Gringore." *Le Pouvoir monarchique et ses rapports idéologiques aux XIVe-XVIIe siècles*. Publications de la Sorbonne nouvelle, 1990.
- Backus, Irena, and Philip Benedict, eds. *Calvin and His Influence, 1509-2009*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *L'œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance*. Trans. Andrée Robel. Paris: Gallimard, 1970.
- Bailbé, Jacques. "Le personnage de Satan dans les tragédies protestantes du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle." *L'Art du théâtre. Mélanges en hommage à Robert Garapon*. Paris: 1992.
- Balmas, Enea. "La tragédie de Caïn de Thomas Lecoq." *Mélanges sur la littérature à la mémoire de V. L. Saulnier*. Geneva: Droz, 1984.
- Baumgartner, Frederic. *France in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Beaudin, Jean-Dominique. "Connaissance de l'étymologie et poétique: l'enrichissement de la langue littéraire par réactivation sémantique et remotivation étymologique: l'emploi du mot *trespas* dans trois tragédies de Robert Garnier." *Lexique et cognition* (1998): 95-108.
- . "La monstrosité et l'horreur tragique dans l'*Hippolyte* de Robert Garnier (1573)." *Littératures* (2000): 93-112.
- Beck, J. *Théâtre et Propagande aux débuts de la réforme: six pièces polémiques du Recueil La Vallière*. Geneva: Slatkine, 1986.
- Beer, Jeannette. *A Medieval Caesar*. Geneva: Droz, 1976.
- Bellenger, Yvonne. "Le personnage de Saül chez La Taille et Du Bartas." *Le Théâtre biblique de Jean de la Taille. Etudes sur "Saül le furieux", "De l'art de la tragédie", "La Famine ou Les Gabéonites"*. Paris: Champion, 1998.
- Berger, Samuel. *La Bible au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969.
- Berriot-Salvadore, Evelyne. *Les Femmes dans la société française de la Renaissance*. Geneva: Droz, 1990.
- Biet, Christian, ed. *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants en France (XVI<sup>e</sup> – XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 2006.
- Braudy, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown: fame and its history*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Brown, Cynthia. *Poets, Patrons and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Buron, Emmanuel. "La dramaturgie d'*Hippolyte* et des *Juifves*." *Lectures de Robert Garnier*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000.

- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Buzon, Christine de. "Morale et passions , pudeur et impudeur dans *Hippolyte* de Garnier." *Lectures de Robert Garnier*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000.
- Cassan, Michel. "La tragédie de *Régulus* (1582) au miroir des guerres de religion." *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance* (2001): 87-103.
- Cave, Terence. *The Cornucopian Text: problems of writing in the French Renaissance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- . *Pré-Histoires: Textes troublés au seuil de la modernité*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1999.
- Cazauran, Nicole. "Marguerite de Navarre et son theatre: dramaturgie traditionnelle et inspiration sacrée." *Nouvelle Revue du Seizième Siècle* (1989): 37-52.
- Chambers, Samuel and Terrell Carver. *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling politics*. New York: Toutledge, 2008.
- Charpentier, Françoise. *Pour une lecture de la tragédie humaniste (Jodelle, Garnier, Montchrestien)*. Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1979.
- . "La cruauté de Dieu." *Les Tragédies de Jean de La Taille*. Paris: Cahiers Textuels, 1998.
- Cohen, Gustave. *Etudes d'histoire du théâtre en France au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance*. Paris: Gallimard, 1956.
- Colebrook, Claire. *New Literary Histories: New Historicism and contemporary criticism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- Collins, James. *The State in Early Modern France*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Conn Liebler, Naomi, ed. *The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Cosandey, Fanny and Robert Descimon. *L'absolutisme en France : histoire et historiographie*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002.
- Couton, G. *Richelieu et le théâtre*. Lyon: Presses Universitaires, 1986.
- Crouzet, Denis. *Les Guerriers de Dieu. La violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525-1610*. Paris: Champ Vallon, 1990.

- Daley, Tatham Ambersley. *Jean de La Taille (1533-1606). Étude historique et littéraire*. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1998.
- Delumeau, Jean. *Sin and Fear: the Emergence of Western Guilt Culture, 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries*. Trans. Eric Nicholson. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.
- Diefendorf, Barbara. *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Di Mauro, Damon Carl. "André de Rivaudeau et la Bible." *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire du Protestantisme français* (1995): 207-19.
- . *Between Shadow and Reality: A Study of Robert Garnier's Les Juives*. Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1992.
- . "La Mort du roi Josie dans Les Juives de Robert Garnier." *Nouvelle Revue du XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle*. (1996): 201-15.
- Dobby-Poirson, Florence. *Le Pathétique dans le théâtre de Garnier*. Paris: Champion, 2006.
- Douen, Orentin. *Clément Marot et le psautier Huguenot*. 2 Vols. Amsterdam: P. Schippers N.V., 1967.
- Drakakis, John and Naomi Conn Liebler, eds. *Tragedy*. London: Longman, 1998.
- Dubois, Claude-Gilbert, ed. *L'imaginaire du changement en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires De Bordeaux, 1984.
- Dubu, Jean. *Les Eglises chrétiennes et le théâtre (1450-1850)*. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1997.
- Duffy, Eamon. *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor*. London: TJ International, 2009.
- Dunn, Kevin. *Pretexts of Authority. The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Eire, Carlos. *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Eisenbichler, Konrad and Amilcare A. Iannucci, eds. *Petrarch's Triumphs. Allegory and Spectacle*. Ottawa: 1990.
- Enders, Jody. "Of Protestantism, Performativity, and the Threat of Theater." *Mediaevalia* (1999): 55-74.

- Faguet, Emile. *Essai sur la tragédie française au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle (1550-1600)*. Paris: Hachette, 1883.
- Fanlo, Jean-Raymond. "Les tragédies de Jean de La Taille sont-elles didactiques?" *Les Tragédies de Jean de La Taille*. (1998): 75-86.
- . "Sentiment du tragique et piété pénitentielle dans *Les Juifves*." (2000): 43-51.
- Farge, J. K. *Orthodoxy and Reform in early Reformation France: the Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500-1543*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985.
- Febvre, Lucien. *Problème de l'incroyance au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle; la religion de Rabelais*. Paris: Michel, 1962.
- Ferradou, Carine. "Fortune et Providence dans les tragédies de Jean de La Taille." (1998): 89-107.
- Forsyth, Elliott. *La portée morale et religieuse des tragédies bibliques dans le théâtre protestant du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Champion, 1998.
- . *La Tragédie française de Jodelle à Corneille: le thème de la vengeance*. Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1962.
- Foucault, Michel. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and other writings 1977-1984*. Trans. Alan Sheridan et al. Ed. Lawrence Kritzman. New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, Inc., 1988.
- Fouquelin, Antoine. *La Rhétorique française dans traités de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche classique, 1990.
- Fragonard, Marie-Madeleine. "Réinventer la tragédie: Saül, péché du roi et vengeance de Dieu." *Par Ta colère nous sommes consumés: Jean de La Taille auteur tragique*. Orléans: Paradigme, 1998.
- Francis, Claude. *Les Métamorphoses de Phèdre dans la littérature française*. Quebec: Editions du Pélican, 1967.
- Frankish, C.R. "The Theme of idolatry in Garnier's *Les Juifves*." *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance* (1968): 65-83.
- Frappier, Louise. "La topique de la fureur dans la tragédie française du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle." *Etudes françaises* (2000): 29-47.
- Gaillet, Lynée Lewis and Winifred Bryan Horner, eds. *The Present State of Scholarship in the History of Rhetoric*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2010.

- Gallagher, Catherine and Stephen Greenblatt. *Practicing New Historicism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Gally, Michèle and Michel Jourde, eds. *Par la vue et par l'ouïe: Littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance*. Paris: ENS Editions, 1999.
- Garrisson-Estèbe, Janine. *Les Protestants du Midi: 1559-1598*. Toulouse: Privat, 1980.
- . *A History of Sixteenth-Century France, 1483-1598: Renaissance, Reformation and Rebellion*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Gethner, Perry. "The Didactic Chorus in French Humanist Tragedy." *Classical and Modern Literature* (1982-3): 139-49.
- Goyer, Francis. ed. *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1990.
- Gras, Maurice. *Robert Garnier, son art et sa méthode*. Geneva: Droz, 1965.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- . "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion." *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies* (1998): 504-35.
- Griffiths, Richard M. *The Dramatic Technique of Antoine de Montchrestien, Rhetoric and Style in French Renaissance Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- . "Les sentences et le 'but moral' dans les tragédies de Montchrestien." *RSH* (1962): 5-14.
- . "The Influence of Formulary Rhetoric upon French Renaissance Tragedy." *The Modern Language Review* (1964): 201-08.
- Hallstead, R.N. "Idolatrous Love: A New Approach to Othello." *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1968): 107-24.
- Hens-Piazza, Gina. *The New Historicism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.
- Höpfl, Harro M. "The Ideal of *Arisocratia Politiae Vicina* in the Calvinist Political Tradition." *Calvin and His Influence, 1509-2009*. Eds. Irena Backus and Philip Benedict. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

- Howe, Alan. "The Dilemma Monolouge in Pre-Cornelian French Tragedy (1550-1610)." *En marge du classicisme. Essays in the French Theater from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. Liverpool University Press, 1987.
- . "La Taille's *Saül*. A Play of Two Halves." *French Studies Bulletin* (1986): 3-5.
- Huchon, Mireille. "Masques du poètes." *Les Tragédies de Jean de La Taille*. Paris: Cahiers Textuels, 1998.
- Jacob, Alexander. *The Roman Civil War in English Renaissance Tragedy*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002.
- Jacquot, Jean, ed. *Les tragédies de Sénèque et le théâtre de la Renaissance*. Paris: Editions Du Centre National De La France, 1962.
- Jeffery, Brian. *French Renaissance Comedy 1552-1630*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Jondorf, Gillian. "'An aimless rhetoric'? Theme and structure in Jacques de La Taille's *Alexandre*." *French Studies* (1987): 267-282.
- . "Doctrine and Image in Jodelle's *Didon se sacrifiant*." *French Studies* (1978): 257-274.
- . *French Renaissance Tragedy: The Dramatic Word*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- . *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- Jonker, G.D. *Le Protestantisme et le théâtre de la langue française au XVIe siècle*. Groningue, Batavia: Wolters, 1939.
- Jordan, Constance. *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Jouanna, Arlette. *Le Devoir de révolte : la noblesse française et la gestation de l'Etat moderne, 1559-1661*. Paris: Fayard, 1989.
- . *La France de la Renaissance*. Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 2001.
- Kantorowicz, Ernst Hartwig. *The King's Two Bodies: A study in Medieval political theology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. Reprint.
- Keegstra, Pieter. *Abraham sacrifiant de Théodore de Bèze et le théâtre calviniste de 1550 à 1566*. The Hague: Drukkerij Van Haeringen, 1928.

- Kelley, Donald. *The Beginning of Ideology. Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Knecht, R. J. *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- Knically, Carol. "The Gothic Idol and Medieval Art." *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* (1991): 283-98.
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar. *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic and Humanist Strains*. New York: Harper and Rowe, 1961.
- La Charité, Raymond, ed. *Writing the Renaissance: Essays on Sixteenth-Century French Literature in Honor of Floyd Gray*. Lexington: French Forum Publishers, 1992.
- Lang, Peter. "Machiavelli in Sixteenth-Century French Fiction" (1988).
- Lanson, Gustave. "Etudes sur les origines de la tragédie classique." *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*. Vol. 10. (1903): 177-231.
- Lazard, Madeleine. *Les avenues de Fémynie: Les femmes et la Renaissance*. Paris: Fayard, 2001.
- . *Le Théâtre en France au XVIe siècle*. Paris: PUF, 1978.
- Lebègue, Raymond. "Christianisme et libertinage chez les imitateurs de Sénèque en France." *Les tragédies de Sénèque et le théâtre de la Renaissance*. Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1973.
- . *Études sur le théâtre français*. 2 Vols. Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1977.
- . *La Tragédie religieuse en France, les débuts*. Paris: Champion, 1929.
- . "L'évolution du théâtre religieux en France des origines à Claudel." *Droit et liberté* (1952): 12-20.
- . "Robert Garnier et les problèmes de Phèdre." *Literatur und Spiritualitat* (1978): 139-144.
- Lecerle, Francois. "Voix de Dieu, voix du mort, voix du diable: l'évocation de Samuel au théâtre." *Les Voix de Dieu: littérature et prophétie en Angleterre et en France à l'âge Baroque*. Eds. Line Cottegnies, Claire Gheeraert-Graffeulle, and Tony Gheeraert. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2008.
- Le Hir, Yves. *Les drames bibliques de 1541 à 1600: Etudes de langue, de style et de versification*. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1974.



- Lestringant, Frank. "Sénèque, la Bible et les malheurs fondamentaux de *Saül* à *La Famine*." *Par ta colère nous sommes consumés. Jean de la Taille, auteur tragique, textes réunis par Marie-Fragonard*. Orléans: Paradigme, 1998.
- Lestringant, Frank, Josiane Rieu and Alexandre Tarrête, eds. *Littérature française du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: PUF, 2000.
- Liptzen, Sol. *Biblical Themes in World Literature*. New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1985.
- Lorian, Alexandre. "Les protagonistes dans la tragédie biblique de la Renaissance." *Nouvelle Revue du Seizième Siècle* (1994): 197-208.
- Lyons, John D. *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- . *Kingdom of Disorder: The theory of tragedy in Classical France*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1999.
- Mangattale-Cezette, Mitsué. *La représentation des passions dans le théâtre tragique de la Renaissance: La Taille, Garnier, Monchrestien*. Paris: Editions Edilivre, 2008.
- Martin-Ulrich, Claudie. "Discours furieux, discours douloureux: le cas de Phèdre dans l'*Hippolyte* de Garnier." (2000): 53-61.
- Martinez, Caritad. "Fantômes, oracles et malédictions: figures du temps tragique." *Le Temps et la durée dans la littérature au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance*. Paris: Nizet, 1986.
- Mathieu-Castellani, Gisèle. "Celui-là répond pour nous aux questions de ce temps...: le choix de Saül comme héros tragique." *Les Tragédies de Jean de La Taille*. Paris: Cahiers Textuels, 1998.
- Mazouer, Charles. *Le Théâtre français du Moyen Âge*. Paris: Sedes, 1998.
- . *Le Théâtre français de la Renaissance*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002.
- . "Les mythes antiques dans la tragédie française du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle." *L'Imaginaire du changement en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1984.
- . "Théâtre et religion dans la seconde moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle (1550-1610)." *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* (2006): 295-304.
- . "La théologie de Garnier dans *Hippolyte* et *Les Juifves*: du destin à la Providence." *Lectures de Robert Garnier*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000.
- . "Les tragédies bibliques sont-elles tragiques?" *Littératures classiques* (1992): 125-40.

- McGowan, Margaret. *The Presence of Rome in some plays of Robert Garnier in Myth and its Making in French Theater*. Cambridge: University Press, 1988.
- . *The Vision of Rome in late Renaissance France*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Meek, Christine, ed. *Women in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000.
- Millet, Olivier, ed. *Bible et littérature*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003.
- . "De l'erreur au péché: la culpabilité dans la tragédie humaniste du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle." *Travaux de littérature* 8. (1995): 57-73.
- . "Calvin's Self-Awareness as Author." *Calvin and His Influence*. Eds. Irena Backus and Philip Benedict. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- . "Exégèse évangélique et culture littéraire humaniste: entre Luther et Bèze, l'Abraham sacrificiant selon Calvin." *Etudes théologiques et religieuses* (1994): 367-80.
- . "Exposition au malheur et politique-spectacle: 'Les Grans Hommes' dans la tragédie humaniste de la Renaissance." *Travaux de Littérature* (2005): 105-22.
- . "L'ombre dans la tragédie française (1550-1640), ou l'enfer sur la terre." *Tourments, doutes et ruptures dans l'Europe des XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles: Actes du Colloque de Nancy édités par Jean-Claude Arnould*. Paris: Honoré Champion. 1995.
- . "La tragédie humaniste de la Renaissance (1550-1580) et le sacré." *Le Théâtre et le sacré*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1996.
- Moins, Catherine. *Lectures d'une oeuvre: Saul le furieux La Famine ou les Gabéonites de Jean de La Taille*. Paris: Edition Du Temps, 1998.
- Morel, Jacques. "Robert Garnier." *Littérature française, La Renaissance III* (1973): 154-160.
- Munns, Jessica and Penny Richards. "Exploiting and Destabilizing Gender Roles: Anne d'Este." *French History VI* (1992): 206-215.
- Nexon, Daniel. *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: religious conflict, dynastic empires, and international change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Noirot-Maguire, Corinne. "Conjurer le mal: Jean de La Taille et le paradoxe de la tragédie humaniste." *Studies in Early Modern France* (2010): 121-43.
- Ozment, Steven. *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983.

- Picot, Emile. *Les Moralités polémiques ou la controverse religieuse dans l'ancien théâtre français*. Geneva: Slatkine, 1970.
- Pidoux, Pierre, ed. "Théodore de Bèze. Psaumes mis en vers français (1551-1562)." *Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1984.
- Polachek, Dora. "Le Mécénat meurtrier, l'iconoclasme et les limites de l'acceptable : Anne d'Este, Catherine-Marie de Lorraine et l'anéantissement d'Henri III." *Patronnes et mécènes en France à la Renaissance*. Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2007.
- Racaut, Luc. *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion*. England: Ashgate, 2002.
- Reiss, Timothy J. *Tragedy and Truth: Studies in the Development of a Renaissance and Neoclassical Discourse*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "Culpabilité tragique et culpabilité biblique." *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse* (1953): 285-307.
- Rigolot, François. "The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59.4 (1998): 557-63.
- Robert, Philippe de. *Les Tragédies de Jean de La Taille*. Cahiers Textuel, 1998.
- Robertson Jr., D.W. *On Christian Doctrine*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958.
- Rollinson, Philip. *Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981.
- Rothstein, Mariam. "The Problem of the Perfect Hero: Garnier's *Hippolyte*." *Romanic Review* (1987): 25-33.
- Sayce, R.A. *The French Biblical Epic in the Seventeenth-Century*. Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1955.
- Schilling, Heinz. "Calvinism as an Actor in the Early Modern State System around 1600: Struggle for Alliances, Patterns of Eschatological Interpretation, Symbolic Representation." *Calvin and His Influence, 1509-2009*. Eds. Irena Backus and Philip Benedict. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Screech, M. A., *Clément Marot: A Renaissance Poet discovers the Gospel: Lutheranism, Fabrism, and Calvinism in the Royal Courts of France and of Navarre and in the Ducal Court of Ferrara*. New York: Brill, 1994.

- Seidmann, David. *La Bible dans les tragédies religieuses de Garnier et de Montchrestien*. Paris: Nizet, 1971.
- Silver, Larry. "Paper Pageants: the triumphs of Maximilian I." *All the World's a Stage*. Eds. Barbara Wisch and Susan Scott-Munshower. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1990.
- Smith, Paul. *Dispositio. Problematic Ordering in French Renaissance Literature*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2007.
- Soulié, Margueurite. *Le Temps des Réformes et la Bible*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1989.
- Stone Jr., Donald. *French Humanist Tragedy. A Reassessment*. Manchester University Press, 1974.
- Street, J.S. *French Sacred Drama from Bèze to Corneille: dramatic forms and their purposes in the early modern theater*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Tin, Louis-Georges. "L'univers tragique de Jean de La Taille: justice ou vengeance?" *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance* (1999): 25-44.
- Valentin, Jean-Marie. *Theatrum Catholicum : les Jésuites et le théâtre (1554-1680)*. Paris: Desjonquères, 2001.
- Van Hemelryck, Tania. "L'idole dans la littérature française des XIVe siècles: discours critique ou discours de critiques?" *L'Idole dans l'imaginaire occidental*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005.
- Vernet, M. "L'Histoire tragique au service du Prince. Un sens politique de la Trilogie de Des Masures?" *Renaissance and Reformation* (1981): 146-81.
- Wagner, Marie-France and Claire Le Brun-Gouanvic, eds. *Les Arts du spectacle au théâtre (1550 – 1700)*. Paris: Champion, 2001.
- Waite, Gary K. *Reformers on Stage: Popular Drama and Religious Propaganda in the Low Countries of Charles V, 1515-1556*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.
- Warner, Lyndan. *The Ideas of Man and Woman in Renaissance France: Print, Rhetoric, and Law*. Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011.
- Wénin, André. "L'idolâtrie comme prostitution dans la Bible." *L'Idole dans l'imaginaire occidental*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005.
- Weimann, Robert. *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in Theater: studies in the social dimension of the dramatic form and function*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

- Wierenga, L. *La Troade de Robert Garnier. Cosmologie et imagination poétique*. Te Assen Bij: Assen, 1970.
- Willett, John, ed. and trans. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1966.
- Wilson, Richard and Richard Dutton. *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*. London: Longman, 1992.
- Winiarski, Catherine. "Adultery, Idolatry, and the Subject of Monotheism." *Religion and Literature* (2006): 41-63.
- Zemon Davis, Natalie. *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987. Reprint.